IN CHINA

Abel Bonnard

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IN CHINA

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BY

ABEL BONNARD

Translated from *EN CHINE*

by

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Acknowledgments and many thanks are due to Mr Arthur Waley for permission to use his translations of ten Chinese poems included in Chapter III., Part III. of this book.

The first poem given: *Old and New* (anon. 1st century B.C.) is taken from *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*, London, 1918, and nine others by Po Chü-i from *More Translations from the Chinese*, London, 1919. These are: *My Servant wakes me; Watching the Reapers; Dreaming that I went with Li and Yü to visit Yüan Chen; Sick Leave; Written when Governor of Soochow; Good-bye to the People of Hangchow; Illness and Idleness; Hearing the Early Oriole; Song of Past Feelings.*

BOOK I

PEKIN

CHAPTER I

Of all the unforeseen events of which a journey to distant lands is composed, none is more startling than the moment of arrival. While the traveller was on the way, crossing America or crossing the Pacific, his thoughts were concentrated round the day when he would reach Pekin, and he left it at that, without further elaboration. But . . . here he is, and the tantalising image of one single day is transformed into the multiplicity of actual things. An unknown world surrounds him, and as yet he does not know how to meet all these novel attacks on his sensibility, nor has he adjusted himself to respond. As he is carried through the town in a motor-car the first signals that he mentally registers are grey trees flowering with clusters of pinkish-mauve blossom; orange-red walls flanking the sides of the avenues and roofs of superb yellow tiles, holding and flashing back the light of a June morning, triumphantly.

To arrive is to gain a whole world, but it is also to risk losing one, that world which study, reading and dreams have created in one's inner self, that world which has the fragile and yet wholly finished character of all creations of the imagination. But for a real traveller, even this menace is not without its own sharp pleasure. It is a unique moment when all the dreams that we have dreamed over the name of a much-sung country, hover and whirl in doubt over that country itself on our arrival; some, like pigeons alighting on a roof, finding rest for the soles of their feet in the reality, and others, despairing of support or shelter, disappearing for ever, into the blue.

On the very day of my arrival, as soon as the hours of greatest heat were over, I motored through the town

which spreads out over an immense extent of space. I was feeling all the intense and naïve curiosity of the newcomer. I was " all eyes " ; and details bred and swarmed in my vision. I was a prey to the traveller's mingled avidity and hesitation, uncertain which details I ought to neglect, which I should retain, and from which I should demand the secret of a soul still strange to me. At the first glance, however, it is easy to decide that one is dealing with an untouched and impenetrable world here. The populace which throngs the avenue is clothed, Chinese fashion, in blue cotton stuffs and floating gauze. The police who control the traffic wear flat caps and a European uniform of khaki linen, but even in this disguise their bodies do not lose their Asiatic laxity. There are no carrying-chairs or carts here. But a stream of rickshaws fills the roadway, interspersed with a few motor-cars, with here and there an ancient brougham from which, at knotty points in the traffic, a lean and emaciated lackey descends and runs to the horses' heads, where he waves his flaccid arms like the sails of a windmill, and then makes a precipitate return to his cramped position on the box.

My car carries me along wide, straight streets which intersect at regular intervals, until, at the end of one of them, I see the high barrier of the ramparts, which enclose the town. Skyward from this wall, there soars one of those castles built over the gates, which we are already familiar with in the descriptions of Marco Polo. All along the avenues low houses seem to be concealing themselves on each side of the road, and as trees start up everywhere between their partially-effaced roofs, you get the impression of passing through a camp rather than a town, and it seems as if the permanent dwellers have adopted the rectilinear design which their nomad forerunners left behind them when they struck their tents and departed. All the while, runners were passing, pulling their little vehicles. I could hear the hurried beat, the slap of their naked soles upon the ground.

There is no noise, not a cry to be heard, only now and then comes a brusque and guttural appeal. My gaze returns to the passers-by. Some of them are quite naked above the waist, and their smooth, polished skin just glistens with a little sweat. Occasionally the eye makes an effort to rescue some face with personality in it from the general monotony, a young man perhaps of concentrated elegance, whose very grace has a straitened and avaricious note in it. But by merely looking at this multitude spread out before us we are forced to realise that the individual has not the value here, that we give him in Europe. Asia calculates otherwise. And things here have no more individual importance than persons. How different to the charming array of striking things which fills the streets of Japan ! Here nothing stands out in special significance, nothing exposes itself to facile observation. But on the walls and on the canvas curtains of little shops there are great written characters above the level of a man's head, which are so imposing that they seem to hold the authority of magic. Everything is muffled, concentrated and immutable. From his first glance the traveller registers a warning that he is in a country which *never* surrenders its soul, which buries its secret deeply, immovably ; that he is in difficult, difficult China.

I was surprised suddenly by an imperial note. The motor had passed through some great red gates and was crossing a marble bridge where I stopped it. A wall which divided the length of the bridge cut off my view on the right, but on the left I saw a whole landscape held captive ; a vast plantation of lotus, the plants so closely pressed together that I could barely perceive the shining of the water on which they fed and spread their leaves. This plantation extended to the banks where some pavilions with inflected roofs were huddled together like a lot of ramshackle sheds. Straight before me at the end of the bridge there was another group of better-built pavilions, now bathed in the orange light of the evening

and only half-seen between the branches of withered trees. Further away, another bridge of marble leapt, as it were, across the water to a wooded peninsula, at the summit of which there arose the pearly whiteness and vase-like shape of one of those Buddhist monuments which are called *stûpa* and are lined with relics of Buddha, and taper into a long neck, like a tall and slender vase. All this was grandiose in effect, although so unstudied: indeed, an atmosphere of laziness and indifference overhung the whole. A flight of rooks, riddled with a flight of swallows as with a charge of small shot, swept across the sky which the sultry heat had left sour, almost curdled.

I let my eyes rest on this spectacle for a long time and then turned them nearer at hand to admire the majestic lotus plants. Soon they would flower. Already near the bridge the first corolla was open and widespread, grave and motionless, and one of the great undulating leaves leaned over it, as a hand is spread out to guard the flame of a lamp.

*

The next morning, in my avidity to seize the soul of this new world in one place which should hold it enshrined, I went to the Temple of Heaven. There, as you know, came the Emperor, until the end of the monarchy, to perform the sacrifice to Heaven at the winter solstice; the most sacred sacrifice of all, which perpetuated the lofty and abstract spirit of the original Chinese religion. I went there early in the morning and no dust had yet tarnished the light of Pekin which in its vast and ideal clarity seems created to bathe the spirits of sages.

Once you have crossed the sacred boundary you find yourself in a large park. The dusty green of sophoras and the tree of life (thuya) bordered the alleys. Few flowers grew in the tall grass; the whitish stalks of wormwood glimmered amongst the green. An exhausted bindweed drooped her flower-cups, ridiculously small, for the insatiable thirst of the sun. I came to pavilions of

one storey only, with square courtyards, and painted that gorgeous, that magnificent red which represents power and happiness here. They were used formerly for marketing, slaughtering and firing the beasts of sacrifice, and now gaping and empty, preserving no richness but the splendour of their enamelled roofs, they have the look of perfect tranquillity in dilapidation, proper to the works of Asia, where things like persons seem less tenacious of existence than in our world. My wanderings led me from one to the other finally to obey the appeal of a triple round roof. It was the roof of a building raised upon three marble terraces, the Temple of prayer for the year. Here the Emperor used to officiate every spring to entreat of Heaven a good harvest, and at this ceremonial everything was blue : the porcelain used, the brocade robes of the ministrants, the sheets of tinted glass which were hung at the windows making the light of day sidereal and cold.

Lower buildings reigned with their own dignity around it ; in the modest cloisters and little porticoes there was no searching after effect : but the proportions of these buildings are so exact, they defer to each other in such exquisite relationship, that all together they give the impression of some motionless ceremonial. One cannot distinguish how it comes about, but in all these buildings the pleasing is strangely combined with the august. It is an architecture devised for dignitaries and philosophers, and regulated by a harmony so subtle, that after having looked at it, you bend your head as if to listen to it. Like the Ancients, the Chinese are disdainful of vain enormities, which are the last resort of bad taste. It is left to us to produce inflated and bloated monuments, as if we were well aware that they would not be noticed at all if they did not usurp a great deal of space. The Chinese, on the contrary, if left to themselves, will choose medium dimensions and will even willingly reduce them to that exquisite approach to the tiny, which enables the eye to embrace and adore the whole mass of the building at once.

The roofs are covered with enamelled tiles, some of clouded milky blue, others of dull turquoise, which are all associated with the blue of the sky by influences as tender as a caress. These beautiful tiles add a note of sensual pleasure, so slight that it is hardly perceptible, to the calm delight which the buildings bring to the mind.

It only remained for me now to see the famous altar. Like the neighbouring temple, it is all of white marble, in three circular terraces, retreating one from the other, with staircases turned to the four cardinal points, and open balustrades. It is not lofty. It only exacts your respect by its appeal to the mind and makes not the slightest effort to astonish the eye. On the evening before the solstice the Emperor would leave his palace and the train which followed him was in no way a manifestation of material pomp. Each detail was calculated to commemorate antiquity. The Emperor himself wore a robe of black lambskin lined with white fox, and covered with a surcoat emblazoned with the Dragon, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars. On arriving in the sacred enclosure he gave himself first to consultation with his ancestors and received their commands, remaining in retirement in the pavilion of the vigil. At last in the cold, chaste light of the winter morning he offered up to Heaven the chosen meats, the bales of linen and silk, a young bull without blemish and a disk of lapis-lazuli, but these oblations were as nothing if he did not honour them with purity of heart, above all. When he reached the supreme or dominating terrace where the circles of the horizon and of the vault of heaven completed and lent their support to the lines of the monument, everything around him had supreme significance. The marble paving-stones surrounded him with nine concentric circles; everywhere there were repetitions of the number nine in perfect relationship to each other, and thus exalted upon this altar of no great height, but by symbolism, higher than any mountain, the Imperial Pontiff must have felt that he himself was an offering to

Heaven, whose mandate he held, Heaven which loves justice above all things.

Rising up from the centre of Pekin you cannot avoid noticing a hill, whose isolation and contour proclaim that it is not the work of nature. They call it Coal Hill because it is said to be nothing more or less than a provision of coal, massed there, in the long-ago, by some provident Emperor in case of a siege. But it is more likely that it owes its existence to the soil which was excavated when the lakes of the Imperial City were constructed in the twelfth century. I climbed the hill this morning under a sun that was already powerful. There are still some very rare trees growing there, white pines whose silver branches are coiled and contorted like serpents amidst the dull green of the surrounding verdure, near the wild pear-tree on which the last Emperor of the Ming dynasty hanged himself. This tree has been loaded with heavy chains to punish it for doing ill service to its sovereign. The hill bears five kiosks on its crater, as the crest of a wave bears ships. These kiosks date from the Ming dynasty. They are bare of furniture and ruinous but still significant from the celebrity, among the Chinese, of their roofs, which are of very beautiful tiles, whose colours seem to melt into the sky and to vary with the light as the hours pass. I went up to the topmost kiosk and paused there. Here I was in one of the great regions of the earth. The long, straight, undeviating road, made to bring the tributes of the whole world to the Son of Heaven, terminates at the foot of this hill, after having pierced the rampart at its central point and having divided the city into two equal segments. Travellers know the solemnity of a moment like this when it is no longer a question of revelling in the colour of a sky or the wafted passage of a cloud, but when the spectacle before them is as much for the soul as the eye. Centuries flowed through the spectacle before me, and

the mind of a whole world was so manifest that one could seize it for one's own.

The whole sober, magisterial plan of Pekin was apparent, from this point, set out with the abstract precision of a diagram. Straight before me was a rectilinear enclosure which contains the Forbidden City. Another immense enclosure contains the whole of Pekin, though it is cut in two by a wall which separates the Chinese city from the Tartar city. These enclosures are orientated with complete exactitude ; each of their faces looking towards a cardinal point, and no other city in the world is constructed so obviously and patently according to the ordinance which rules the universe. The palaces which rise up closely pressed together in the Imperial City have the same rigorous orientation. They face each other and respond to one another. There is some relation to the fields of agriculture in their great simple forms, and their glorious yellow roofs are dazzling like fields of ripe corn, and seen to be lifting a symbol of the fecundity of the imperial soil up into the sky. They make no attempt to conquer Time by the defiant haughtiness of their materials, nor to dispute with it the durability of their wooden pillars or their earthen tiles ; but they cheat Time of its victory, by simply replacing what it destroys as it destroys it, and disdainful of the days that wear them away they endure by force of an unchanging spirit, not by the resistance of matter. The Imperial City stands alone. All that is around it is as nothing. You may and do perceive a whole multitude of lowly roofs, a prostrated town. but even this nullity is according to the ordinance. The different quarters are divided from each other by the straight undeviating avenues, and even the walls of the meanest dwelling are built to face the cardinal points, just as the enclosures and the palaces contemplate them from their august *façades*. The order reigning here is very different from that which we are accustomed to ; instead of encouraging man to develop and carry forward new order, it fixes man to

the spot, binds him with unbreakable bonds and effaces him.

A little further away another hill rises from the Imperial City. It is the hill I noticed on the evening of my arrival. The green and yellow roofs, adorned with dragons, of the pavilions on its slope, emerge and disappear among the branches of trees. The *stûpa* built by Kien-Lung rises on the pinnacle of this hill at the top of a staircase of giddy steepness, like those of all the monuments, so that man mounting up to them may arrive in the posture of an inferior, of a suppliant. A little temple faced with porcelain has been constructed in the base of the edifice. Between its bars of bronze you can just perceive a monstrous statue with the head of a bull, waving a semicircle of arms : this is a deity of the Lamas, Yamantika, the victor over the god of the Dead. The view which you get from that hill differs a good deal from the view from Coal Hill ; it has more freedom and less regularity. You can see the steeples of the Catholic cathedral, and the polygonal tower of a Taoist temple, and the distant circular roofs of the Temple of Heaven. The high straight line of the rampart raises its aerial buildings up into the air at intervals. Further away still, beyond the plain, are the scorched and parching mountains, now rose-coloured and red, sinking to sleep as they fade into a cloud of the day's dust. The woods and lakes of the Imperial City stretch below me. Thus, you will find them round all the palaces of Asia, where the Emperors with all their fabulous treasure have never been able to renounce the natural happiness derived from water and from trees.

Here you find pavilions of painted wood, with the paint peeling off, beside the stagnant water, where boatmen handle their boats with much difficulty, hampered by the clinging arms of the lotus. I walked along under the withered trees almost stupefied by the heat, but an unforeseen spectacle reawakened my interest and curiosity. It was a long wall covered with plaques of porcelain,

of which the splendour in full sunlight was quite blinding. Nine dragons are writhing there in high relief. There are two pairs of two, in colours which respond to each other, and they are separated by a single yellow dragon, and are all gloating with their goggle-eyes over the little sphere of a flamboyant jewel which seems to be escaping the convulsive clutch of their claws, while they have all the appearance of breathing fire and brimstone upon it. An art emptied of all substance triumphs upon this lustrous wall, which dates from Kien-Lung. The dragon, the universal monster, whose sinuous coils can stretch, at a pinch, from Heaven to the abyss of Hell, is here nothing more than a Court dancer, who is performing a violent, concerted measure before the Emperor. The same frantic ballet is reproduced on the other side of the wall, but instead of being enhanced to dazzling excitement by the sunshine, it is soothed and lulled to quiet by the shade.

An untouched world: that is the traveller's first impression of it, and he only confirms it as he penetrates further.

I had the great good fortune to arrive here in company with M. Paul Painlevé, and thanks to his kindness, I have been associated in the welcome accorded to the Mission of which he is the chief, though I have no claim to this honour. At official receptions nearly all the Chinese wear European dress nowadays, the elders very awkwardly, but the young men not without a certain elegance. Here and there, in some corner, you may see an antique figure, an old man with shaven crown, who sits impassive with his hands on his knees, with huge spectacles framing his eyes and a stringy white beard. The day on which we had the honour of being received by the President of the Republic, he was dressed in a black silk coat and a skirt of silver-grey silk, open down the sides and giving glimpses of trousers fitting tightly round the ankles. That is the

ordinary everyday Chinese costume ; one of the simplest and most decent that men have ever worn. Poems, in marvellous calligraphy, hanging on the wall welcomed the great man of letters. The President seized every possible occasion of smiling at us and responded to our bows by jerking out a series of little curtsies, after the Chinese fashion. He is a man who was a great functionary under the monarchy : there are a few of these left in the new order of government, like broken fragments of the old *régime*. These, and these only, still answer to the ideas that we have formed of their country. No sooner are you presented to them than you actually see them wreathing their faces with ceremonious smiles and politeness. Many of them are cultivated men. You meet marshals who write verses and an admiral who has translated the poems of Sung into English, whose face lights up directly you touch on the subject. The younger political men are very different, absolutely detached from the arts and turning resolutely away from anything which has no utility. Science rather than art has their homage ; but they only look upon her as the mother of power. They have borrowed from us more expeditious manners than those of their elders. Engaged in all the byways of a political faith full of intrigues, they will none the less in after-dinner speeches give vent to ideas which would be considered the expression of an ideal by us, no less than by themselves.

Next in order, come the government officials, Ministers, professors and engineers ; who have for the most part studied in Europe or America, but in spite of their diplomas only occupy subordinate positions, and what is more, unless they have the luck to serve in foreign concerns, they are very irregularly paid. They constitute therefore a disappointed and discontented section of society. I have no means of judging of their professional value but many of them make a favourable impression owing to their amiable manners, their hard-working and honest appearance, and indeed give one a first idea of

the serious virtues of the Chinese soul. They also are complete strangers to the arts and seem to be detached from the past, but they hold on to it by at least one link : the exercise of the domestic cult.

The Emperor has been treated by the Republic with due regard. He keeps his title of Imperial Majesty, and his Manchu Guard, and has been voted a considerable revenue. The present Emperor is a youth who rejoices in an English tutor. It is said that he is anxious to travel and that hitherto he has asked permission in vain. The President of the Republic pays official calls upon him and they exchange gifts on the great anniversaries of the year. I am told that he was lately given a map of the world, where every capital is marked with a precious stone : the young captive Emperor can indulge his dreams as he looks at it. But the superb yellow roofs of the Forbidden City, where he lives, shelter nothing more than a dead principle now.

Only men appear at official receptions. The Chinese still live as the Ancients, in that they do not bring their wives into their public existence. But I doubt whether this separation will last much longer. Men who have occupied posts in other parts of the world naturally took their wives with them and many of these women adapt themselves to our customs and forms of pleasure with incredible rapidity. One evening recently I went to dine at one of those public gardens in Pekin to which people resort for rest and refreshment after the overpowering heat of the day. There I noticed a young man and a young woman slip off together into a dark and deserted alley, and that in itself is a sign of the times, for in former days, Chinese prudery would never have tolerated any such tête-à-tête. But something else arrested my attention. At a brilliantly lighted table one of the young women who have lived in Europe, dressed in the latest Paris fashions, was entertaining a number of ladies from the first families of Pekin. These latter, who had their hair tightly drawn back and braided, were

all dressed alike in white jumpers and black skirts, which marked a concession to foreign modes, because otherwise they would all have been wearing the tight trousers which form the usual garb of Chinese women. They were all bare-headed. The woman from Europe was addressing them with considerable volubility. They listened to her intently, all huddled together, and evidently with amazement and dismay. At moments an identical peal of laughter rang out from every one of them, thus emphasising the impression of cohesion which I received from the group. What was that eloquence revealing to them ? Was the speaker describing the ways of the *Parisienne* to them, from her point of view ? Was she inciting them to rebel against their husbands' habit of taking concubines, and to general emancipation ? I learnt later that her discourse was indeed on those lines, and that there in the sultry night, under the motionless branches, Chinese civilisation had suffered yet another assault.

Indeed, what is not changing and dissolving at this moment of the world's history ? Everything is changing and it is the importance of this crisis (which includes the whole of humanity for the first time) which gives our epoch its dominating characteristic. Since the empires of the Aztecs and the Incas crumbled to dust, Chinese civilisation has been the only one to preserve the prestige of independent development. In spite of foundations common to all antiquity which are to be found in it, and are perhaps derived from the Chaldees, and allowing for the part which India may have played in the formation of Taoism, and for the influence which Buddhism afterwards extended to the whole of the Far East, it is none the less certain that China fixed the principles which have dominated her history, entirely beyond our reach. Her laws and customs were definitely opposed to ours. There was nothing, even to the barrier of the national character, which did not defend the country's impregnable soul. But, though difficult to understand,

this human society, until lately at any rate, was easy to describe. It presented the best composed and produced *ensemble* that the world has ever looked upon, and if one may be allowed to express it so, the greatest *ballet* of history. It was enchanting as a spectacle.

But there is an end of this old, polished, impenetrable China, gorged full of itself, where the foreigner was like a water-drop slipping down a varnished surface. With the crumbling of the Empire, a whole assemblage of doctrines perished too. And for the moment, one cannot see a chance of any enduring restoration of the monarchy. Even if an Emperor were placed on the throne again the old *régime* would never come back to life. Yuan cheu Kaï, a Chinese personage, if ever there was one, in his mingling of trickery with violence, succumbed to precisely these new forces which have found the light of day.

On the other hand, the Republic is no more than a name. Openly flouted in the South, the government at Pekin is mistrusted in the provinces. The real power is concentrated in the hands of the generals, who are peculiarly isolated from European influence and engaged in boundless intrigues which really have no horizon, and they are always ready to unite against any one of themselves who appears to be acquiring too much power. They depend for support on the soldiers which they raise, but these men are badly paid and always ready to rob and desert, and therefore form a somewhat shaky pedestal for their masters. But China has known political situations such as this before in the course of her history. There is no doubt that it will end in the foundation of a new dynasty.

But on this occasion the influence of the Occident is a serious complication. It has not yet reached the depths of the Chinese soul, but just as the wind blows locks of hair into wild confusion round a face, so are the Chinese students agitated by Western influence. It is owing to the students that China has been driven to

divorce her Past. Do these young people really know what they want in their impatience to act, or rather to bring themselves into the public eye, in their avidity for learning, or rather for knowledge ? Some of them, especially those who have studied in America, seem determined to impose the forms and frameworks of that country upon their own. But their dealings with foreigners have had the effect of exciting their patriotism in a more susceptible form, and for the most part they are less desirous of adopting our spiritual standpoint, than of purloining the secret of our power.

Thus everything is confused and confounded. Formerly the opposition between East and West was clear-cut and satisfying, and, in a way, reassuring. There was no element to make mischief in the solemn exchange of courtesies between the two worlds. Their differences were founded on the different idea of man which each world upheld. While with us, there reigns securely the ambition of being oneself which can raise the supreme types of civilisation from the ordinary ranks of humanity, but generally expresses itself in mediocrity, by a gross and contemptible display of violence ; in Asia, on the contrary, man does not defend his own boundaries so jealously ; he is not even so well aware of them as we are. Nature is more powerful, more overwhelming than with us. It exhausts and ennervates him ; it agglomerates persons with things.

As human individuality is not so clear-cut in the East as in the West, there is less reason for its glorification : there are no statues of human beings in the Far East. The Emperor is as much lost and merged in his pleasures as the Beggar in his vain dreams. Those are held to be sages whose souls are the most detached from the personal, the most absorbed into the universal. Look upon them, if you will, as golden or painted barques, or as mere planks, existences are all alike floating objects on the bottomless waters of life.

The beliefs in the relationship between beings, and in

any number of rebirths, tend to prevent a man here from ever identifying himself completely with his life-conditions of the moment. On that point he has no difficulty in preserving an impassive superiority, and continues to regard his life-conditions as a borrowed garment to be handed back when the moment comes, and changed for another.

A Frenchman who knows Chinese very well was staying in Pekin about fifteen years ago, and he often had a Chinese book open on the table at his meals in the hotel. He noticed that the servant who waited on him often glanced into this book, and not with the futile inquisitiveness which all inferiors display here but with an interest which appeared more intelligent and sustained. On questioning him he found that the waiter must have been a serious student. "But how is it," said the Frenchman, "that you are in this position, with your brains and education?" The Chinaman smiled quite unabashed. "Oh! what does it matter," he replied, "it is only for one life." Nowadays, one has less and less chance of hearing words like these, which might appear artless, but yet hold the germ of a sublime doctrine.

By dint of agitating, the Occident has succeeded in communicating the fever which is devouring itself, to the Orient. That is not to say that there has not been, at all times, in China a very strong strain of cupidity and practical sense. But Tao, Buddha and even Confucius combat this greed of gain with all their power. The wisdom of the Sages has struck a dagger into the heart of material life in China. The West is in the act of drawing it out. In proportion as the new spirit spreads, so the far-away horizons are effaced, perspectives are closed up, nothing any more can outweigh the importance, nor diminish the reality of the present moment. From being twofold, life has become terribly simple. Soon it will be nothing but an orgy of pleasure-snatching, here, as everywhere else. And yet the fundamental ideas of Asia are not so easily to be destroyed. One wonders

what unforeseen defences the Asiatic soul will present to the attack of modern influences.

In the face of such problems it seems the most natural course to interrogate the foreigners living in China first, but, with a few exceptions, you must not expect to gain much from that. It is by contradicting each other that the resident foreigners do the traveller greatest service. That, at least teaches him the difficulty of the questions that he is propounding. And what is more, he finds that the aristocratic taste for accurate observation has been lost here as everywhere else. The foreign residents either brag about things or crab them. Some of them take unfair advantage of the long duration of their residence to give authority to their refusal to understand anything. Others, constrained and hampered by life in an undefinable world which is secretly undermining their root-qualities, bear it a kind of grudge which they seem to have difficulty in explaining. The former are too insensible, the others have been too deeply influenced, though against their will. And while these last evade your questions with an evasive fatuity and the reserve of the initiated, perhaps they have fewer secrets to give away than they believe.

The most obvious effect of Asiatic influence on the European is the weakening, the deadening, of that *need* of *precision* which is proper to the western spirit in all its vigour. It is replaced by a sort of consciousness with half-closed eyes which admits and cherishes absolutely contradictory ideas at one and the same time, and for this very reason is obliged to abandon all hope of ever being definite in its pronouncements. Asia does not allow strangers to approach her soul until they are disarmed of the qualities which would render them dangerous ; she wins them to her customs, she puts the spell of her voluptuousness upon them, and communicates the taste for mystery to them. Rare are those who attain to her secrets, and rarer still those who, having wandered so far, retain enough strength to return with the spoils.

And will the facts of the case give us more precise information? Politics in these days are always taking an unforeseen turn. The government at Pekin has capitulated to the menace of its enemies. The President of the Republic, who has no power because he has not a single soldier at his command, has been obliged to sign the decrees which have been imposed upon him, which take all power from the generals of the adverse faction. Each party has put its own troops into the field, and one hears that they have already been engaged. It is the height of summer and the heat is prostrating in its power and jaded nerves add to the general sense of discord.

The foreigners are always questioning each other and there is no moment at which one has a keener realisation that their curiosity barely makes a scratch upon the surface of a world whose inner movements escape them altogether. Some of them are anxious, at all costs, to distribute the banners of ideas among these rival interests. The only circumstance which gives any colour to the struggle is the fact that Japan upholds the government at Pekin, but then it must never be forgotten, that whoever the victor may be, he is destined to fall fatally if he attempts to build up power on a basis of Japanese support.

Then, too, not one of the different generals stands out as a personality; they are all merged in the great grey monotony which is China. One of them, who is in opposition to the government of Pekin, is attempting to play the part of a soldier-citizen, and under this title has rallied a small following of credulous administrators to his flag. Another, who is one of the most derided of the partisans of Japan, and has been convicted of despatching one of his rivals with his revolver when he came, by invitation, to dinner, passes as the only serious worker and decided character engaged in these intrigues.

The truth is that these disorders are the natural outcome of a general state of affairs which is bound to produce them over and over again, and foreigners who

naively expect a definite crisis which shall decide it all, are like the people who, accustomed to classical drama, expect to find either interpretation, catastrophic climax, or *dénouement* in the interminable representations of the Chinese stage.

And yet, Pekin is afraid. Pekin is afraid and you can just perceive it from the slight ripple of a shudder which passes over certain yellow faces. And outside the French Hotel which stands opposite the Legations there is an incessant whirling to and fro of motor-cars. Most of the political men have taken rooms in the foreign quarter where they would be sure of a safe refuge in case of danger, and these are the same men who vehemently demanded the suppression of extra-territorial rights, only a few days ago. But, for the moment, all the Chinese are taking advantage of the fact that those rights are still in existence.

The shops are mournful and dismantled, merchants are doing no business, the whole population of the town reminds one of a colony of insects before a storm. But in the streets leading to the Legations there is a continuous stream of vehicles loaded with baskets, bales and cases. Every one is lodging his most precious possessions in the foreign quarter. The cellars and strong-rooms of the banks are gorged with valuables and it is impossible to help certain fancies from straying through the mind when you think of all the treasure that is amassed within such narrow bounds.

The soldiers, however, are recruiting coolies by force and requisitioning the peasants' carts just as they were doing at the epoch of the three kingdoms, but even these troublous conditions have historical truth which is pleasing to the mind amid the vain show of ideas borrowed from the Occident. And though these menaces apply to all the Chinese alike, every one of them hoists some foreign flag, however little right he has to it. I saw one who was actually riding a bicycle with the Japanese flag flying. He was certainly not the best-loved, but neither was he the least-respected.

After dinner, when the heat was less overpowering, several of us together would motor through the town or visit the railway stations. The ordinary railway traffic is suspended. In order to prevent Pekin being cut off from the rest of the world the *corps diplomatique* has had recourse to the articles of the treaty concluded after the Boxer riots. One train leaves every morning for Tien-Tsin, guarded by soldiers from the Legations and displaying as safe-conduct a sheaf of European flags, to ensure that it shall be unmolested by Chinese troops in war-zones. For the rest of the day the only traffic consists of Chinese troop and hospital trains. Already, some of the wounded have been brought to Pekin and their arrivals and departures give rise to scenes of dismay which stand out sharply against a permanent background of apathy and somnolence.

At night we generally find the stations empty. The officer on guard slouches limply to and fro and coolies lie sleeping as if they would never wake, just where they have flung themselves on the hard asphalt or upon a pile of deal-boards and their bodies have a weird look of dislocation and disjointedness. Sometimes a troop due to leave for the war-zone marches up to the station. The soldiers form up on the square without the slightest military precision in their movements but rather with an adroit disarray from which they manage to emerge in some sort of order. They look less like soldiers than nimble young waiters and valets. They wear a European uniform of linen, but there is never one of them to be seen without a fan stuck into his belt. Suddenly they all squat down, for that is the position of repose here, while an old but beardless officer stretches out his hands and breaks into a discourse in a voice pitched too low for his words to reach us. The instant he has finished the men disperse with the childish delight displayed by soldiers of every race when they have a moment's liberty.

They scamper off to buy cakes, cigarettes or drinking-cups from the vendors who are waiting for them. The

soldiers are mere youths, and most of them are sons of peasants (hardly ever the eldest or the second) who have been driven to enlist by sheer want. Their pay is four dollars a month, if they are paid at all, that is to say, and they find it easy to desert with impunity when they are thoroughly sick of the service. I am told that they are lacking in spirit and keenness. But let us spare our lamentations on that point. Personally I was more struck by their look of docility than anything else. They seemed to me as malleable as clay awaiting the sculptor's hand.

As we were returning that night I noticed a Chinese lantern on a long pole, as we were driven along one of the avenues which cut across the town. It was the lantern-sign of the public baths and my companion proposed that we should go in and see them. I demurred for it was midnight. I was assured that we should find no difficulty in going over the baths even at this hour. We went in and in the dim light I could see the male bath-attendants asleep all round a great hall, lying naked on their backs, each with a fan between his fingers and his polished skin glistening with sweat. Their faces betrayed neither surprise nor annoyance as our entrance awoke them. My companion spoke to them, and he was evidently chaffing them, for they all laughed. With a perfectly good grace they showed us the tanks for bathing in common, the separate baths, the drying-chambers, and then ushered us out with smiles and bows.

Once outside we made up our minds to go to the house of Tuan-si-joué. He is an old marshal who commands the military forces of the government. He has been so long at the centre of affairs that he is treated with the greatest respect, for many generals have been his pupils, even among those who are now fighting against him, and nothing counts more, in China, than a relationship of that order. He can turn out a set of verses on occasions, and is said to be much given to opium. About

this time it was often possible to see him respectfully supported down the platform to his railway carriage by two officers, owing to his condition of stupor. As our motor-car turned into the street where he lives, however, it was stopped by a file of soldiers. No one could pass.

The news of civil war was becoming more definite; it seemed that Tuan's troops had the advantage, and there was no lack of experts among the foreign residents to explain to us that it could not be otherwise for many reasons, of which the first was that the victorious party had the support of Japan.

In the meantime, the very distinguished Frenchman, whose guest I was, and myself, were invited to dine at one of the temples in the mountains near Pekin. These temples are the only source of pleasure in the country round Pekin. A few trees spread their shade around them on the stark, scorched mountain-sides, and foreign residents make a habit of hiring a part of them in the summer, from the priests who inhabit them, in order to spend the weeks of the most oppressive weather there.

We started late in the afternoon. Every evening the gates of the city are closed for the night, but we were provided with every possible authorisation for having them opened to us on our return that night. We were delighted to escape from within the city walls for a few hours; yet the landscape is nothing to look at, and the livid pools and dusty groves of the Summer Palace cut a sorry figure at the foot of parched and stony hills. But with the light of the sunset, loveliness came stealing down upon this sterile world and a few showers had sufficed to clothe the mountain-slopes with a velvety verdure.

We left the motor-car at the foot of a ravine, and walked up to the Temple of Pi-yun-sse. A wealthy eunuch, well looked-on at Court had built it as the resting-place of his tomb towards the end of the Ming dynasty. The place has beauty and a certain straitened charm of

its own. Courts planted with flowers succeed one another on the slope of the mountain and there you have that rare pleasure in China of listening to the crystalline tinkling of a stream. Next, you come to the yawning caverns of empty halls and ruinous pavilions and roofs with their swelling lines inflated as they give way and fall gradually into ruins. Then the eye is caught and held by a great majestic rose-coloured Gate, crowned with a great mass of marble which bears five *stûpas* upon it like tall vases and carved with an almost dashing elegance. Beyond this monument there are only the groves in which the tomb lies concealed.

When we reached the Temple, night had fallen and the last pale light of day seemed to have taken refuge in the great mass of marble. On the terrace which runs across it, a table was laid for dinner, illumined by two lamps only and it seemed that the darkness pressed softly down upon them. A few little lights quivering in the velvety blackness of the distance marked the position of Pekin. But we had hardly taken in all the delight of our surroundings before my companion was fetched to the telephone, which is laid on to the dispensary close by, run by the French doctor who was our host of the evening.

My companion soon came back with news. There was a complete change in the course of affairs. Tuan's troops were beaten and in flight, and deserters and marauders were to be expected at the very walls of the city. It had been decided not to open the gates at all, in order to keep them out. We were pressed to return immediately. But it was all too delightful to leave, especially without dinner. However, immediately after that, we hurried down to our motor-car. We passed through a hamlet where the vibration of a few furtive human existences was only just perceptible. If the marauders should descend upon it there was terrible

suffering in store for the poor peasants sheltering in its dim recesses.

We heard running steps behind us. It was the little district magistrate who stopped us in the most courteous manner, bowed, clutched his fists to his breast, and implored us not to venture on the night-journey but to delay our return until morning. We thanked him and went on our way. We got into the motor-car and started, but as we passed a little hotel where foreigners sometimes stay, we made a halt there and telephoned again to Pekin. But this time the guards at the Pekin gates made it clear that they did not intend to embarrass themselves with the responsibility of opening the gates to us that night. We were told that the marauders were already at the gates; that they would probably seize our motor-car, if nothing else, and that, in fact, our safety depended on delaying our return until the next day. We asked if we could be certain that the gates would be opened to us then. There was no definite answer.

The great object of these people is always to throw off the problem of the moment somehow, to hurl it into the abyss of the future, and for them the abyss of the future always begins to-morrow.

In the meantime the officer in command of the district had presented himself. He warned us that the road to Pekin was barricaded and that we could not pass. Outside, the country was wrapped in dark tranquillity. But that darkness was probably full by this time of scared sentinels who would fire off their rifles at the first alarm. Accordingly we decided to postpone the rest of our adventure and lay down to sleep if the mosquitoes would graciously permit it. We were up at dawn. The light was a glowing yellow and it was hot already; in a lotus-field an old peasant with a disagreeable jeering expression was gathering the half-open flower-cups in the hope of selling them to us. These lotus-buds are rather like large cream-coloured eggs and bring something of the beauty of an embroidered Chinese

screen into the generally forbidding aspect of the landscape.

We started. We passed through the little village beside the boundaries of the Summer Palace. Everything seemed to be as usual and we began to think that we had been taken in by false reports. But the road to Pekin, which is generally thronged with traffic, stretched before us quite empty in the glare of the sun. At last the ramparts came in sight. Our motor-car dashed through the suburb, arrived at the last turning and drew up before the gates. They were shut.

I had often admired the magnificent solidity of the old wall before, but never, I must admit, with so much conviction as on that day. It raises aloft the wooden building which surmounts it, and swallows dart and swoop between the gloomy crenellated battlements. No one was at work in the suburb. The populace lounged round us in a state of indecision, which one felt certain might be converted into panic at any moment. We went into the little outer guard-house at the foot of the rampart and began negotiations. But who would take the responsibility of opening the gates for us? The great object in life of the subordinates we had to deal with, is to avoid any responsibility. There were a few soldiers there and two or three civilian clerks of whom one was a wretched little specimen whose skin was so much affected by opium that he was like a little semi-transparent *bibelot*. He laughed, was very courteous and entered into a boring and irrelevant conversation about the products of the suburb. The most annoying thing that could happen then would be the actual arrival of fugitives from the battle-fields, because then Pekin would never relax from its contraction of fear and would remain closed. They did come. Two or three deserters arrived as we stood there waiting. They were in a wretched condition certainly, worn-out, utterly done for, and still wearing the *brassard* of the colours of their general. They came into the guard-house and exchanged a few

words with the guards at the gate, without betraying either hostility or friendliness. It was like a meeting between prudent insects smelling at each other and putting out their feelers.

These fugitives also wanted to enter the town where their generals had been masters only a few days before, which now refused them entrance. We continued to wait. It grew hotter and hotter. Even the *bibelot*-clerk, or clerk-*bibelot*, fell silent. Two or three more fugitives arrived. Were they coming up in battalions? It was all very boring. But at last an order arrived. Thanks to the intervention of our Legation the gates were to be opened to us. Cries were heard from the inside. There was a tremendous clanking of chains and grinding of bolts which would have provided glorious thrills in a melodrama. Finally one of the enormous leaves of the gate gave way, our motor-car slipped into the dim light of the bastion while a file of soldiers barred the way behind us. Then the second gate was half-opened. The enormous enclosure which is Pekin now swallowed us up. We were within the walls.

Pekin remained walled-up like this for weeks as a precaution against invasion and pillage. It was related at this time that the defection of a whole division had changed the issues, and that a general of the beaten party had launched an attack against his own troops in order to escape more quickly. However, as one must eat, even in Pekin, some of the gates were pulled stealthily ajar at twilight and in hastened a troop of the good country-folk with high-piled baskets and loads of green vegetables.

These days of inertia and anxiety happened to be at the hottest time of the year and apparently it was even hotter than usual this year. The idea that the town was walled-up, added indescribably to the sense of stifling. Not a drop of rain fell. Sometimes a procession of clouds would file in slow majesty across the sky, concentrating on themselves all the terrible desire of the parched land cracking with drought beneath them.

But the clouds passed. They passed without bestowing their vivifying stream, and the azure sky resumed its unalterable splendour.

On other days, a suffocating wind would blow, which raised phantom pillars of dust so high that they clouded the light. Then the best thing was to shut oneself up until it was over. Only a few runners kept up their mechanical trot in front of their little vehicles. The persons whom they were pulling along spread silk handkerchiefs over their faces to protect them, and as the wind made the silk cling to the hollows of the eyes and the prominent cheek-bones, you really came to imagine that you were imprisoned in a city of phantasy, where slaves are wont to draw dead men in little carriages under a sky of thick low smoke-clouds.

As a rule nothing would happen all day long. You lay all day in your room, and left the sun to reign outside, while you got through the hours as best you might until evening. At last the Star of day withdrew himself, and some little stars came blinking out, red like inflamed eyes. A few malodorous bats swooped and dipped round the houses. And you had hardly felt a little, almost imaginary relief from the absence of the Tyrant, when an enormous dusty moon would replace him. It was just as hot. It was the day all over again. Midnight was only midday, but white and glaring instead of yellow and glaring. The grasshoppers carried on as usual, scraping away in the glowing air. In these circumstances you are seized with a violent desire to let fly at some non-existent imaginary window which will let in freshness, to break a huge pane in that closed and glassy sky. Your fevered body is equally incapable of action or repose. It succumbs at last and you fall into an unwholesome sleep, while outside the sun comes back again. It is dawn again, and the distant faint violet mountains are stretched against the dawn-sky like hangings, and rooks fly across it with such hard and raucous cries that it sounds like the barking of dogs.

The sunsets at Pekin are of extraordinary variety and richness; at times so pale and profound that you may feel all the delicacy of Northern atmosphere in them, but more often in the summer, they are troubled, portentous and wicked looking, with streams of violet and blue-black cloud across them, where you seem to recognise, the choicest shades of Chinese ceramics. I watched the sunset this evening from the roof-garden of the hotel: the frail delicate barrier of the Western mountains seemed flat against the sky. The sun had just slipped down behind them, but like a divine breath, a vast outpouring of pure golden light flooded up into the vault of space just where the sun had sunk. Drifting clouds blazed with such crude and vivid tints that it seemed to me that colours were revealed to me in their pristine purity; that I was seeing violet, yellow and true rose-colour, for the first time. I could not take my eyes off this feast of colours which almost wounded them, for it was entirely lacking in the soothing vagueness of the mixed shades seen upon the earth.

When at last I turned my eyes upon the city it had subsided, was epitomised and blurred away into a brownish smudge along the plain, but even now the great simplified roofs of the Imperial City stood nobly out above the rest, imposing on the mind that suggestion of nomad tents from which their contour is probably derived. Then I let myself fall into the abyss of history. I looked back to China of Antiquity, in the order of its going from the beginnings, from the three Sovereigns, those whose forms as carved upon stelæ are enlaced in inferior positions with animals, those sovereigns who dominated by influence only, whose reign was one motionless act. And from the five Emperors, those who reigned in constant diligence, industry and sobriety, making long journeys of inspection through the Empire, with chariots to hasten along the roads in, boats for the river, clogs for the mud and climbing-irons for the mountains.

Each one of them reigned by virtue of a single element

from which he took colour. Hoang-ti found all grace in the clouds and that is why he instituted cloud-officers, and after clouds were they named. Yen-ti found grace in fire ; and that is why he instituted flame-officers, and after flames were they named. T'ai-hao found grace in dragons ; and that is why he instituted dragon-officers, and after dragons were they named. When Chao-Hao came into power, lo ! a phœnix appeared, and that is why he found grace in birds, and why he instituted bird-officers, and after birds were they named. The officer called the Phœnix presided over the calendar. The Swallow was the officer of the equinoxes. The Shrike was the officer of the solstices. The Blue-Bird was the officer of the beginning of seasons. The Scarlet-Bird was the officer of the ends of seasons. The Sparrow-hawk was the officer of the people. The Sea-Eagle was the officer of war. The Kite was the officer of affairs . . . The five Pheasants presided over the five arts ; it was they who taught the profitable use of instruments, who regulated dimensions and measurements and maintained justice among the people.

Human society has perhaps never been so closely associated with the natural order. Each functionary was simply a double, a translation of some natural agent. Every natural disturbance gave warning of some derangement of State affairs. A bout of fine weather lasting too long was a sign of heedlessness in the Emperor ; a cloudy sky of the Emperor's gloomy mood ; excessive rain was a sign of injustice on the Emperor's part, drought denoted his negligence ; a violent wind meant that the Emperor was being idle ; an eclipse of the sun was interpreted as undue influence exerted by the Empress. If deer were seen in the suburban districts it meant that there were too many smooth flatterers at Court. When the wild geese retired far into the wastes it was a visible sign of the withdrawal of the Sages !

Nothing was left to chance in this universe without a single gap or vacuum. Even the delirium of dreams

was reduced to rigid order. Officers were detailed to tour the Empire in order to report on dreams. The future was handed over to professional diviners who consulted the tortoise and the milfoil.

Everything was organised on a system of numeration. There were five chastisements, six duties, five rites, five notes and eight instruments.

When the Emperor happened to be an exemplary man order reigned by virtue of that alone. Wearing a square hat with red strings, the Son of Heaven would cultivate his own fields, while all the princes laboured in their fields wearing square hats with green strings. A severe and pure type of music entirely free from emotion was composed to express the cold harmony of the Empire. The one hundred families lived in concord. The male phœnix and the female phœnix perched upon the palace roofs.

All the different ancient civilisations of Asia amaze us by their manner of flattening and levelling the multitudes that they were built upon. But the might of a central idea has nowhere been so powerful as in China. This power was not directed only at the inferior classes, the life of the Emperor himself was one long obedience to the rule. The Pharaohs were gods; the kings of Assyria were absolute tyrants by force of arms; the Emperor of China had to live as a pattern to the people. He carried some annoying detail recalling him to the rule of moderation in all things even among the trappings of his glory. For instance he would have ordinary rush mats in his finest ceremonial car. His guitar with red cords was pierced with a fretted design so that the harshness of the sounds he produced falling vexatiously upon his ear, should prevent him from indulging in a taste for harmonies too effeminately soft.

In this aversion from luxury, this spirit of sobriety and simplicity it is easy to recognise a society of agri-

culturalists. Thus does the edifying and imposing mediocrity of Chinese society appear to us from its very outset. Other characteristics serve equally well to define it. There is no doubt that at one epoch the whole of humanity attributed the same magical importance to the conduct and the slightest actions of a king. It is nevertheless characteristic of the particular praises bestowed on Emperors in China that they were most fervently given to the inactive, to those rulers who governed the Empire better by their central immobility than they would have done by much exertion and effort. Asia has never believed much in action ; she has always humiliated it, casting it at the feet of dream and speculation, but it was actually left to the Chinese, the most disinterested and positive thinkers to make a theory of effective inaction and to guarantee its practical usefulness.

Thus came the great parting of the ways. Henceforward religion, poetry and thought flowed from inventive India, nourisher of souls. And yet China compelled the admiration of surrounding races by the unshakable solidity of its position and the majesty of its ordinance. From the beginning and until to-day the Emperor of China has remained the august type of power to all nations who have had the opportunity of observing his dominion. Yet the Emperors of antiquity did not all conform to the rule. Some of them would not endure any shackles and these were just like any other Eastern despot in the outrageousness of their excesses.

The Emperor Tcheou, the last of the Chang-yinn dynasty who reigned thirty-two centuries ago, was so strong that he could tear wild beasts to pieces and so malicious that he had a retort to silence every critic. He had a favourite woman whom he idolised to madness. He let loose the evil power of music in smooth flattering harmonies and lascivious dances. He had joints of meat hung up over a vast space until it resembled some hideous distorted forest and sent naked men and women to chase each other through this strange larder. Now and then,

however, a philosopher was bold enough to call him to account. Once when one of them appeared before him to remonstrate the Emperor replied with a sneer: "I have heard that the heart of a Sage has seven openings. I should like to see if it is true." Whereupon he commanded that the breast of his censurer should be cut open. He delighted in the spectacle and the invention of tortures. By his command a copper column, well smeared with grease, was laid across a glowing brasier. The condemned were forced to slither across it until they fell into the red-hot coals. Then the favourite laughed.

When twenty centuries ago, under the Han dynasty, Taoist ideas were uppermost, the Emperors were marked out as victims of the magicians, who persuaded them that out of their magic they could supply the elixir of immortality and could put the Emperors into communication with the heavenly powers. One of the wizards represented to the Sovereign that in order to establish relations with the transcendent beings everything about the Imperial Palace must be made to recall to the spirits their own heavenly mansions. This was unanswerable logic. Nothing was neglected to make the palace into an immense trap for Genii, such that they could not mistake it for an earthly habitation. An edifice was built with lofty terraces, and pavilions, whose walls were painted with vistas of earth and sky of the Supreme Being and his train. They went so far as to add little sculptured clouds to the chariots of state so that the symbols of an aerial existence should appear everywhere. At the summit of a tower of cypress-wood the bronze figure of a man gathered the dew on a wide disc and this dew was believed to be water sprinkled from the moon, the pure water which shall preserve the human body from death.

Thus were imperial souls given up to folly. Now Europe is one massed resistance against the unreason of the individual. In Asia, everything combines to con-

sent to it. Multitudes only serve to distend the monstrous inflation of a single being. But in their case, as with the Roman Emperors, the omnipotence of a man cannot fail to throw a glaring light upon human fallibility. The souls of emperors abandoned to delirious excesses may be compared to banners that the wind makes sport of at the summit of a tower.

The founders of dynasties are always vigorous, active and well-advised in their actions. But their immediate descendants waste their strength in the pursuit of pleasure. Taoist, Buddhist or Confucianists, or successively of all these religions they had the nervous weaknesses of princes brought up by women, and more than one of these frail tyrants must have resembled Xerxes who depended on dreams, fell in love with a tree, and burst into tears when his millions of men marched by.

It is a remarkable circumstance that the Orient, so vain of the subjection in which Eastern women are held, is yet more governed by women than the Occident. Unquestioning of their slavery, Oriental women await their conquerors in the equivocal shades of the harem, attended by eunuchs, diviners and sorcerers, who are all able to make their influence felt when fatigue of the senses leaves the mind relaxed.

In Europe, where woman has an existence of her own, where man has allotted her a part to play, he has found it easier to steer clear of her action upon affairs, hitherto. Agitations in which women have played an important part like that of the Fronde are apt to appear rather ridiculous in our eyes. Our great men have not tolerated the interference of women and where it has been otherwise as in the case of Louis XIV, for example, who mixed up his politics with an insolent display of his adulteries it deprives him of his French nationality, of which he is so typical otherwise, and in approaching him to Asiatic sympathies, withdraws him from ours. It is the history of the West which is really virile.

The political crisis which has just been agitating Northern China is for the moment charmed away. Just as furniture, which has been upset in a quarrel, is rearranged the fictitious apparatus of government which covers anarchy here has been set up again. Tuan and his party having fallen, the President of the Republic has disavowed the measures which he took at their behest. He has accused himself of all his mistakes and failings in a public document, but without resigning, just as the Emperors used to do. A writ has been issued against the Ministers of the last government; the police are on their track and their photographs are posted up at all the cross-roads, which gives me the opportunity of seeing most of the personages with whom I had the honour of dining on my arrival, pilloried now, in effigy, though still clad in full dress and bristling with decorations. As a matter of fact everybody knows that they have taken refuge in the Japanese Legation. Guards have been stationed at each gateway of the Legation quarter in case the culprits should wish to submit to capture with a good grace. In that way appearances are respected and the former Ministers will escape in good earnest when they please.

Tchang-So-Lin, however, the mighty general who rules over Moukden and took no part in the military operations, has now taken advantage of the victory. He has a large number of troops in fairly good condition and provided that he can come to an understanding with Japan he will be master of a great deal. He is said to have been a brigand at one time, but is none the less for that, a man of ancient descent; his family having been exiled to Manchuria towards the end of the Empire, fell upon evil days, and he only adopted this despised profession in order to provide for their wants. Note carefully this typically Chinese example of virtue.

Some of the foreign residents laud him for his audacity and resolution, while others assure you that he only consults his own interests. The truth is that these

characters profoundly disconcert Occidentals. It is impossible to label them. They are plunged into a labyrinth of intrigues without a single dominating idea, and in order to make anything of them in the West, it is necessary for the painstaking Occidental to credit his Oriental mystery-man with all the qualities in which he is entirely lacking.

Tchang-So-Lin is to arrive at Pekin to-day and I have come out to see his entry. The sky is grey, and the standard with five stripes flies over public buildings; the gateway of the Imperial City which was burnt down in the Boxer riots and afterwards restored, rises up majestically with its angular roofs on the base which isolates it between the two railway stations. Opposite the station where the general is to arrive they have constructed a little Arch of Triumph in quiet restrained tints, with so much attention to minutiæ and pretty little detail that it might be the work of an elderly maiden lady. The police on the pavement urge the populace in guttural tones " to pass along." An empty space is soon cleared. All the soldiers lining the route wear paper flowers with streamers on their tunics. Riders dismount and take up a position on foot beside their Mongolian steeds, who are far surpassed in size and quality by a few fine horses from Turkestan. A very few large rain-drops fall from a colourless sky.

Finally a long blast is blown on a trumpet. Then a muddled collection of little carts and carriages loaded with luggage begins to rumble past in confusion, interspersed with a few motor-cars, where as many as four officers are to be seen standing on the steps. Suddenly, giving an impression of being hurled like a hand-full of pebbles, a knot of cavaliers, passes at a gallop, some reminding me of the Mongol riders in ancient paintings, by their mastery of their little beasts, others, on the contrary, bouncing uneasily on the backs of their long-suffering steeds. One fat officer, riding with all the grace of a sack of potatoes, happens to attract my glance.

Now they have all passed, and I have missed Tchang-So-Lin who was certainly in that group. Such was the entry into Pekin of the man who is its present master.

Now comes a company of infantry, announced by shrill and plaintive fanfares and by two great red standards emblazoned with the name of the Commander-in-Chief, in great white letters. The two first ranks held aloft long halberds of honour dressed with tall red tufts. The last rank consisted of artillery-men with their machine-guns and one never sees those weapons in the hands of aliens without a strangely queasy sensation. They marched past with a flaccid step, and with a sleepy expression on their impersonal faces, as if they were only kept going by the call of their sorrowful bugles.

That evening, old Tuan, who is still held in great respect, gallantly sent a banquet to his triumphant rival. The old usages are still in being, you see.

And what does the populace think ? Do they confine themselves to accepting these changes in the modest hope that they will not entail too much suffering upon themselves. Do they take any share in the strife ? Most of them have decorated their dwellings lately, but rather as if they feared that they might be molested if they failed to, as if they were hastening to proclaim that they were a people whose lot has fallen to them in a " fair ground," in case the contrary should be speedily proved to them. However, one is assured that even the coolies are pleased with the result of the war because the partisans of Japan have been beaten. If it were really so we should be discovering the awakening of a new feeling and it would be an important occasion.

But an acute observer contested the truth of this. " The people of Pekin," he said, " really loathe Tuan, because they are and always have been in favour of the Empire, and Tuan prevented the last attempt to restore it from culminating in success. Therefore it is certainly

true that the people now rejoice in his downfall. On the other hand as the Europeans steadily uphold the Republic and it is known that they do not uphold Japanese intervention in China, the people think they will put a better face on their feeling by calling it hatred of Japan." I cannot tell you whether this is the right explanation but it sounds plausible. It shows you at any rate how cautious you must be in examining the facts. It is not enough to know of their existence, you must know how to interpret them.

Let us go out of doors, and plunge in among the populace. An observer can never afford to neglect material that is at every one's disposal. The characters which mark the difference between the two worlds are peppered about in this crowd which elbows me as I pass through it.

I find myself passing along a little street which flows along between low walls surmounted by a little leafage. An old lady passes in a rickshaw with a flower stuck into her scanty *chignon* and all the lower part of her shrivelled supercilious face is lost in an enormous goître. Some children are playing languidly outside a door. A woman totters for a few steps on her triangular deformities of feet, like a bird whose wings have been clipped to prevent its flight. The street-sellers pass by one after another, each one proclaiming his wares with the particular noise which is an indication of the nature of his trade. The hairdresser has a tuning-fork from which he expells a vibration every now and then. The confectioner bangs two copper cupels together, another trader plays a set of wooden snappers, another holds a long drum downwards and hits it with two hard fruit-kernels attached to thongs. That furtive but sonorous tremor of bells comes from a little hedge of bells (I cannot describe it in any other way) which surmounts the mender's workstand. All these noises have a muffled and restrained note intimately associated with the unchanging life, the insignificant but tenacious effort of this swarm of little

merchants, and really it evokes comparison with the buzzing of an insect community. One would say that the cricket and the grasshopper were making signals to each other, loud enough to be heard and recognised among themselves, but too carefully muffled to be apparent to any bird of prey on the watch for them. Amid all this caution, only one clear limpid sound proclaims that the author of it fears no one : it is the note of the blind man's silver gong.

Come back into a main street. Here we find restaurants with flames bursting out of the tops of the ovens, with rolls cooked by steam and piles of smoking-hot paste-balls. Bearers sit about browsing over their rice in bowls. Here is a child with its whole face buried in a slice of water-melon. Fat merchants only half-clad come to the fronts of their shops, to breathe a little fresh air, as fish rise to the surface of the water on summer days.

There are beggars about with faces of such complete insensibility, that in their emptiness and nullity they have a likeness to the sublime faces of ascetics given up to contemplation.

But these details do not stand out. They are merged into a whole from which one has to make an effort, to disengage them : at first you see nothing but a multitude which is the sum total of all that I have been describing and much besides and the heat seems to make this dough-like mixture of beings still more compact. At first it reminded me of life in certain towns of Southern Europe. There is the same swarm of people, the same itinerant hawking in a very small way, and there are the same touchingly humble pleasures. We may even state that the Orient reaches as far as France. Only when we cross that frontier do we find the individual standing out from the crowd, brilliant with a personality of his own. And yet what a difference between the crowd which surrounds me here and a crowd in some town of Italy. Down there in Italy, every instant some gesture of a woman, or jest of a man, some involuntary beautiful

movement of grace, gaiety or kindness, stands forth as a signal, like a tall palm-tree on a river-bank. The Chinese crowd on the contrary is a stream which flows between embankments of stone. It does not spend its force in useless emotion, or what would be considered useless emotion in China. Only a quarrel occasionally breaks up this unnatural composure, and then at the sight of the awkward fury, the hysterical rage of the two adversaries, glaring at each other as if they would like to gobble each other up, but yet are uncertain how best to set about it, you understand. Oh! you understand what violent instincts the rites have held in check.

But these disputes are very rare. Every passer-by goes straight to his business without looking about him. Even the loungers in the street do not show any curiosity about street-incidents, or at any rate only a dull curiosity which like a glass without tinfoil seems to reflect nothing. There is no expression in the faces, voices are monotonous and never in the least caressing. You certainly receive the impression of an absolutely insensible race and the foreign visitor immediately makes up his mind that there he has hit on a capital difference between the two worlds.

You may meet jolly good-fellowship here, far more often than sympathetic kindness. For instance, though you are received in the little shops with the greatest politeness if you should happen to bump your head as you often do against the absurdly low ceiling of the shop, all these good people would burst out laughing. That is their natural reaction. I have seen the Chinese roar with laughter at serious accidents which seemed in their eyes, in the *first* place, comic misadventures. They would also think nothing of laughing at a corpse.

During the last attempt to restore the Empire at Pekin, the soldiers of the opposing camps were firing on each other across a square. Two bands of the same side had separated to take shelter and wished to communicate with each other by an emissary. But it would be necessary to pass across the line of fire which meant

certain death. The men of one group perpetrated the monstrosity of persuading a child who was with them to make the attempt. Quite unexpectant of his fate the child made his gallant *sortie* and was killed. All the soldiers laughed.

At the taking of Canton by the Anglo-French troops in 1857, some detachments of coolies who had been put at the service of the Allies became intoxicated with battle and rushed into the fight. When the head of one of them was shot clean off all his comrades were consumed with mirth.

And yet one does not see the brutal scenes in the streets which degrade some of our European towns only too often. The Chinese treat their draught-animals most benignly, but if they are sparing with shouts and blows it is in the interests of economy and not owing to real clemency. If they saw any utility about it they would not hesitate to inflict the most cruel treatment on their animals. There is a passage of Mencius on this subject which I cannot refrain from quoting, because it is so overwhelmingly characteristic: "The Sage," he writes, "cannot endure to see animals die when once he has seen them alive; after having heard their cries when they are slaughtered he cannot make up his mind to eat flesh food." Then what is his conclusion. Will he abstain from meat altogether, or will he at any rate recommend temperate use of this diet? Not at all. "That is why," he continues, "the Sage locates the slaughter-houses and kitchens exceeding far from his dwelling." Here is the very essence of that cowardly wisdom (which we must confess is common to all meat-eaters, except the butchers themselves) which pushes unpleasant associations on one side rather than take the trouble to suppress the cause of them; which limits itself to evading everything which might trouble the delicate egoism of the Sage.

The Chinese seem, however, to be really fond of birds, which they even take out for a walk with them, and when

they come to a patch of grass they place the cage upon it, and crouching down beside it they listen to the trills and shakes of the little singer, with an air of beatitude ; but there again it is difficult to decide whether this taste does not proceed from childishness rather than from real tenderness of feeling and perception.

The tenderness that the Chinese, and also the Japanese, do possess, is almost entirely concentrated upon children. Boys especially are idolised, and it is quite common to see a baby-boy appear on the threshold of a house, enthroned as a little monarch, in the arms of his nurse, crowned with a sort of diadem of material adorned with many-coloured tufts. Indeed there is nothing in China so amusing and enchanting as a Chinese child. With their intriguing airs of craftiness and fun, with the oblique, mischievous glance of their narrow eyes, it is they, and not the grown-up people who are like the Chinese, embroidered on screens and old silks. They are most coquettishly bedizened. Patches of velvety black hair are left upon their little shaven heads, from which their plaits spring, braided up with red cords which end in tassels of the same colour, a colour which is considered to bring good fortune here.

The parents seem to give way to them in every respect and persons of the most weighty intellects delight in amusing them, and come down to a level within the little grasp, without the smallest difficulty. With us on the other hand, many people of weight and position would fear to make themselves ridiculous by any such demonstration, and even if they went in for it would probably behave most awkwardly.

We can no longer step back to our own childhood. It has become as strange to us as a former existence. Throughout the whole of Asia it is otherwise ; the grown man is marvellously at ease with the child, because the child in himself still lives.

One reason why the Chinese crowd is so dull and poor in aspect is to be found in the insignificant part played by

women. In any other quarter of the world woman is a boundless source of poetry, whether in Europe, where she can show and express herself, or in the East where she has the magical power of all guarded mysteries. Here she is neither guarded nor developed, but treated most cruelly of all, reduced to dullness and indeed to nothingness in the sight of all. Dressed in a short sack-like blouse and tight black trousers, staggering along on bandaged feet, her hair dragged back, her face habitually cross-grained, the ordinary Chinese woman's only dismal attempt at coquetry is to put on a few jewels. The best-looking among them would not catch your eye anywhere.

The Manchu women are certainly more attractive, taller, and looking slender, in the long robe which inundates them from neck to foot. There is a certain fascination in their ivory faces, painted to look like idols, and the hard angular arrangement of their silky black hair.

Sometimes a ceremonial procession appears amongst this crowd as distinct from it as a vessel from the ocean which bears it. They are for the most part wedding or funeral processions and for the foreigner it is very hard to distinguish the one from the other. Held high above the people's heads you will see paper storks, and then swaying and oscillating, a number of those big Chinese lions constructed entirely of green leaves, which look like mongrel dogs out of a nightmare, and only make you laugh by their tremendous effort to be terrible.

This morning I happened to meet a great funeral procession. The sky was grey and a sharp wind tormented the fringe of the parasol-canopies. On each side, the procession was bordered by a string of men walking in single file, dressed in closely-clinging green shirts which were stencilled with Chinese characters in rust-colour. They had felt hats like flat plates with a ragged plume sticking up in the middle, and carried red staffs tipped with gilded Buddhist emblems. There was also a number

of large paper dolls, representing servants and concubines, which were to be burnt, by way of dispatching them to the dead man, and certainly they looked only fit to be cast into flames as quickly as possible in order to rid the world of their foolish smiles and complete inanity of aspect. Then there were children carrying platters of gilded paper squares, which took their place in this illusory apparatus as the riches destined for the dead; other children were carrying bunches of artificial flowers, whose tender colours seemed to be overwhelmed by the menace of the sky. A man in linen breeches with bare legs and feet walked at regular intervals in the ranks striking a gong, to regulate the pace of the procession. He wore a scarlet shirt and cap like those which were once worn by our convicts. When he stopped beating the gong the procession came to a standstill, the children began to laugh and joke among themselves and to furl the parasols with some difficulty, as if they had been sails, and as this was taking place you saw the phœnixes painted on the parasols being folded down on huge, bursting, wine-coloured bull-finches, like birds of prey swooping upon their victims. Some members of the procession fell to scratching themselves, others lighted cigarettes. Some of the lowest rabble in Pekin take part in these processions and nothing is done to give them a presentable appearance. That sense of the fitness of things peculiar to the *bourgeoisie* of Europe is entirely lacking in Asia; there on the contrary you find more pomp than decency and a mixture of elaboration and negligence, of luxury and rags, which, when you have acquired the taste for it, has its own splendour. Once more the gong began to sound and the procession set off again. Now you hear wailing and soon you see a company of men advancing, blowing into long wooden trumpets, while others, with embroidered aprons hanging over tattered breeches are beating drums. Then comes a Chinese cart with green and red curtains, then a chair wreathed with flowers where the memorial tablet and a portrait of the dead

man are enthroned. But the dignity of the procession is stricken to the heart by the fact that this portrait is no longer a painting, as the usage was, but a horrible enlargement of a photograph !

Next comes an orchestra tinkling bells ; and then, a particularly magnificent parasol, whose glory absolutely effaces the three monkey-like bearers who are entrusted with it. Now the members of the procession are dressed in white, as if to signify a deeper state of woe ; bands of linen stamped with writings float upon the breeze ; here are more children but passing more quickly now and carrying coffers and vases ; behind them walks a company of priests in grey linen robes, and behind them again a group of people moving very slowly, each with a white paper chrysanthemum pinned to the breast ; these are the family mourners. Several of them wear soft European felt hats, but the nearest relations have observed all the rites : they wear white boots, and white cloths with woollen tufts are bound round their heads ; they are dressed in white linen which has not been hemmed up and is even soiled, in order to show what a wild condition their grief has brought them to. The chief mourner is a tall thin man, leaning on the ritual staff, which ought to be made of hazel-wood, and is adorned with white paper decorations. Two other mourners support him under the arm-pits ; no matter what startling noise occurs in the street he never lifts his head nor looks round, and at moments, he so far respects the conventions, as to feign a swooning condition. Behind him there is a man rattling knucklebones. And finally enormous, glorious and triumphal under its brilliant pall, amid showers of paper and the waving of scarves comes the coffin crushing its group of bearers to the earth. At the very end comes the last small change of detail, children, bundles of stakes bound together with yellow linen, chairs and carts with white curtains.

No possible effort is spared here to achieve magni-

ficence in the processions and Asiatic families seize the opportunity for an outburst of vanity and display at least as often as Europeans. The desire of being in the public eye is very powerful in the Chinese breast, quite as powerful as the desire for pleasure.

Public opinion is a perfect tyrant. There is no race more terrified of ridicule. If one of the adversaries in a dispute is able to make the crowd laugh at the other, the latter simply feels that he has been unhorsed and is rolling in the dust, and is so much ashamed, and so convinced of his inferiority that he at once relapses into silence.

You have only to watch the humble folk greeting one another to be convinced that there are ranks and social positions at the very bottom of the ladder, and that susceptibility must exist everywhere in China because politeness does. I have seen servants who would have accepted a severe scolding quite calmly, fearfully perturbed because their foreign master, having sent for them, took no notice of their entrance, and then, in an absent-minded manner which was scarcely feigned at all, put a few questions to them. At such times I could not help recalling the double meaning of the French word *question* (it means torture, as well as question) so intensely did the poor fellows seem to suffer. What could be the reason of it ? Perhaps, the fact was that this is the usual procedure of masters in China, and that these commands to appear and stand trial had so often been followed by condign punishment, that it was impossible to carry out the first part of the treatment, without immediately awakening in these subordinates the involuntary and hereditary fear of the second. But if that is declared far-fetched, let us admit, at any rate, that the man felt that his master's sarcasm lessened his importance in his own eyes, so effectively, as to put him on the rack.

Here, everybody is somebody, however infinitesimal. It therefore follows that no one is nobody ; and social life in China may be compared to one of those great

classical designs, in which no face of the walls is left bare, where the slightest bit of surface is made part of the scheme by its obedience to the laws of the whole and by its supporting columns. It is enough to drive a Chinaman to suicide if he should have to endure the downfall of this *façade*.

When Yuan chêu Kai was compelled to descend from the throne of which he had only just taken possession, he did not live long, and a report went about that he had been poisoned. It is unnecessary to suppose that poison was administered to him ; his own shame, rage and spite at being thus annihilated before the whole of China were quite enough to poison him.

It is this susceptibility of the Chinese which makes their mutual relations so delicate. They are sensible of the smallest considerations in this respect, and in any differences you may have with them you will gain their gratitude if instead of abusing any advantage you may have, you allow them any modest covering for their state of defeat. On the other hand, no one, even of the lowest rank ever forgets or forgives an offence. China is the country of everlasting revenge. History and romances are full of long-drawn-out vengeance, which does not even end with death, for the offended person is born again to glut himself with resentment. We have a careless saying that " words have wings " ; but they think otherwise in this country where words have preserved a power that is almost magical : nothing passes unnoticed, not even words flung to the winds. This is declared by a proverb which is just the opposite of ours : " A word spoken—is an arrow discharged : it sticks."

But whatever their feelings are they manage to conceal them. The Chinese disgust for the expression of anger is well known : it is what drunkenness is to us, an obscene degradation in the public eye. At the same time, one must not exaggerate. If they despise us to the extent they do for giving way openly to anger it is largely

because they know that it will not be carried into action, and not only because they consider it degrading. The Empress Tseu-hi gave vent to appalling fury from time to time, but as it was followed up by terrible effects, far from injuring this sovereign's reputation, it augmented the fear which she inspired in the nation.

In most cases whether through necessity or convention the Chinese control their tempers, but let no one be deceived as to the violence which is thus reined in. It is a received opinion among themselves that the effort involved may be fatal to health and even to life. Here is another proverb, which bears witness to it : " Sufferers from phthisis, cancer, or suppressed rage are already summoned to the tribunal of the Master of the Infernal Regions."

This morning, I attended a prize-giving at the Marist College. There were about four hundred students present, and a little entertainment had been provided for us. The programme announced fables from La Fontaine and some scenes from Molière, and whilst I was glad to think that, thanks to the Brothers, our language at its very best had travelled so far, I admit that I expected some of those dreary recitations that one just endures, of which the students acquit themselves as if it were forced labour. How very much mistaken I was. Nothing can have been keener than the pleasure of the audience unless it was the pleasure of the performers. " *Qu 'allait-il faire dans cette galève ?* " provoked inextinguishable mirth. Not a point was missed. Here was a race which could really appreciate the sense of fun peculiar to other nations.

Then the *palmares* were read out. Prize-winners came up to receive their prizes and I particularly remember the face of one of them, a boy of fourteen who had been pointed out to me as their most remarkable pupil by the Brothers. It would be impossible to see

a nicer expression than he had, or to receive compliments in a more becoming way than he did. His face was so prepossessing that one could not help wishing to see this scholar one day admitted to those feasts of knowledge and wisdom, where men of absolutely different race meet on the same level of intellect. Watching him smile I fully understood the grace of the Chinese. It does not belong to nature, race or climate, but it is the acquired and sometimes exquisite grace of a civilisation; of courtesy and culture.

CHAPTER II

The heat is not so overpowering this evening; let us go out and visit the art-dealers, in search of *curios* as they call them here. The most important of these curiosity-shops occupy a whole quarter to themselves. The dealers will greet us with bows and smiles, and then they are accustomed to leave their visitors to betray the nature and level of their tastes by the choice that they make. If they think you worth the trouble they will carefully unpack their rarest objects, and are quite equal to showing you real and false antiquities with exactly the same expression on their faces.

And yet, however impassive they may force themselves to appear, they are as inquisitive as children. Should you arrive in one of these shops carrying a purchase that you have already made, they will not rest until they have stealthily discovered what it is, and I think there is more chance of your making a bargain if they perceive that you have just been buying something elsewhere. Suppose that you lay the parcel down and walk away, they will creep up to it, and gently lift a corner of the paper wrapped round it and if you turn suddenly round they will just manage to find time to change the expression of their faces from puerile curiosity to the usual impenetrability. When you ask them the price of anything they are artless enough to hesitate a moment. They are evidently appraising the foreigner's resources, the depths of his ignorance; they are communing with their perceptions to decide how much the foreigner will stand in the way of being "rooked." They might be compared to a sportsman selecting the cartridge which is to bring the game down. At last they decide; they fire: the price is named!

Even if you do not buy anything these curio-hunts are very interesting. All these hot dusty streets are poisoned with evil smells. It is, however, the season of the tuberose, the flower which "has the scent of the moonlight," as they say in Chinese. They are being sold everywhere, and there is no nauseously smelly little shop where you will not see these pale blossoms, the colour of a Spanish girl's ivory complexion, and where you will not have to drink in the heavy perfume which is pouring from them. And the very same men who inhale this perfume with the delight of connoisseurs, will breath in the noisome exhalations, that I have just mentioned, as if they were non-existent. Are they capable of shutting off the power of their senses at will? Or do they by a sort of perversion derive some strange enjoyment from a fetid odour?

The shopkeeper is leading us to his back premises now, and I choose to pause a moment in the narrow courtyard that we are passing through. There are two or three oleanders growing there with some cages full of crickets hanging from their branches. Here also we find several porcelain bowls full of greenish water, and lazily, lazily undulating through the green transparency are some of those grotesque little fish which are so carefully bred in China. They respond in every detail to the tortuous dreams of Chinese imagination. These tiny but magnificent monsters with prominent eyes, circled with gold, flap their flounced fins morosely: long floating fins they are, which trail out through the water like banners in the air. While I linger to admire them, the merchant, who seems vaguely flattered, waits, with an almost imperceptible smile, upon my pleasure. Sometimes he will be complaisant enough to fish up one of the rarest creatures for me to inspect; the little fish makes no difficulty about being caught and gasps foolishly as he lies limply on the tiny network trays, and plunged once more into the water, he dives into it languorously.

Overhead there is a sweet and husky murmur. It

comes from a flight of pigeons soaring past with whistles tied to their necks.

Then feeling quite enervated and overcome by a sort of somnolence, one falls into a dream of the whole range of studious, yet frivolous amusements of this ancient people, the cricket-fights, the beetles harnessed to paper coaches, the narrow gardens where whole landscapes seem to have been compressed by the art and guile of a magician.

It is indeed a country where serious reputations have been gained from the carving of fruit-stones, where in the third century B.C. a courtier spent three years painting dragons, birds, horses and chariots upon a bean. When his work was accomplished he offered it to the Prince of Tcheou, who saw nothing but a red bean and flew into a rage as if an impolite joke had been practised upon him. "O prince," said the misunderstood artist, "be so good as to have a fence constructed of ten planks, and make a window in it eight feet square and examine the bean in that place in the glory of the dawn." The prince did as he was asked and he then perceived that the bean was covered with the portrayal of many incidents.

In Chinese taste there has always been this craving for reducing and enclosing everything, but during the last few centuries it has begun to override everything else. The Chinese *must* have dwarf-trees, ponds which represent the sea, pools which represent ponds, pebbles which take the place of mountains, and so forth. Indeed their inventiveness in the diminutive never flags. One would almost come to the conclusion that they only really love what is captive in their grasp, at their mercy, and you feel that you never know how this equivocal solicitude may develop: will it lead to caresses or to torture?

Just as old China is dissolving, *Chinoiserie* has become fashionable everywhere. Now that a soul-deadening uniformity is spreading over the world, you feel that some

instinct is warning us to collect and preserve everything, even down to the merest trifle which breathes of the worlds that are crumbling ; crumbling to dust, that after all, we love. At the outskirts of Chinese art like a hedge, warmed, enriched and glorified by autumn colour, we find a vast entanglement of long silk tassels, of necklaces, buckles, tobacco-boxes, carved kernels, lanterns, rings of wood or jade to wear on the thumb in archery, filigree cages each enclosing a perfumed flower, and over all this brilliant medley a flight of fans hovers like a swarm of butterflies with palpitating wings, and above them kites are soaring with aerial grace. A world of minutiæ, a studied frivolity, a taste for etiquette and affectation is the inner significance of all these knick-knacks. Decoration however ingenious it may be is never left to caprice, and the emblems, birds or flowers or whatever they may be, all have augural or official meanings.

But this world of rather stunted enchantment is carried on by other objects far more rare and precious: the whole series of inexpressibly delicious works of art carved in hard stone. Lost in admiration before the congealed suppleness of malachite leaves, before smooth jade frogs, peaches of rose quartz or amethyst, and diminutive trees with blossoms of mother-of-pearl or coral you seem to be wandering in the orchard of Aladdin, in an incorruptible world, a more densely-packed and concentrated world, altogether a less facile world than that which turns up a laughing face to the rays of the sun.

The craftsman in China has made such copious use of his time that it seems out of proportion to the duration of life. And yet he makes no effort to associate his name with the work. He has devoted himself entirely to the object that he wanted to produce with an insistent and one might almost say adherent curiosity. His persistence becomes embodied. We are still in the dark as to how much occult *prestige*, what inexpressible hidden importance, may be communicated to a work of human hands by the inestimable pains devoted to it, joined

with the self-effacement of the artist. Such a work of art equals a work of nature, both having come into being by means of inexhaustible patience. For truly those fruits created from agate or amber, that crystal vase, whose irreproachable form seems merely to encompass a bubble of air, are less suggestive of the results we expect from manual skill, than of the nameless triumphs achieved by the magical application of blind forces in the blue depths of a grotto or the green depths of the sea.

Springing up beside the crystals we find the cold and brilliant porcelains of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The former clothed in one single rare colour, the latter painted all over with scenes from life, which behind the defence of the enamel seem to offer us ironic evidence of the existence of a society which we are strictly forbidden to enter.

The lacquers, in their turn, carry on the same stories, but that, which in the porcelain was merely a flow of cold prattle, takes on the deepened charm of a tale, in the lacquer. Life is represented there in the most precise detail but imprisoned in the deep rich glue of the varnish. These details are, as it were, transcribed or transposed to the misty discreteness of details in a dream. Lacquer seems to have been created for the purpose of bringing the world of dreams into the light of day. Landscapes are merely indicated by long trails of golden dots and dashes like those which sometimes appear in the first phosphorescence of sleep. On the limpid shining doors of great cupboards, on the folds of great screens where the eye melts into sheer delight, ceremonious pedestrians exchange courtesies, fishermen cast their nets, decorated junks slip down an eternal stream. A cloud of butterflies follows a procession of functionaries. Women comb their hair and frail willows weep passively by the water-side. A solitary spectator seen at a round window gazes upon all these things, with as peaceful and remote an air as if he were really sitting up in the moon.

Then we come upon other pieces incrusted with glass

and semi-transparent stone, carved into birds, fruit and flowers, which open up the sumptuous shades of an enchanted forest to our eyes. Still more ancient panels spread out a landscape in deadened colour on their glossy surfaces, a landscape which is sleeping, drowned, engulfed in the unctuous thickness of the varnish.

But the sense of mystery which these low-toned works of art exhale so freely can also reach us in a purified form from pale objects like the lovely Sung ceramics. These for the most part are milk-white, or ivory-coloured, or else flooded with an opulent pale-blue enamel, or some of them drenched with a strange inky-blue, every one of them austere and unadorned except by their own inexpressible perfection. When we stand and look upon these we are carried far above the volubility engendered by decadence; and just as we come to the snow-line when we climb a mountain, so we come to silence in the high places of Chinese art.

As life in the Occident becomes more and more a noisy race driving men forward, the more relief and refuge we should be able to find in the reserve, the secrets, the profound refinements of the arts of Asia. With us the most beautiful things cannot escape the mark of the boaster; they have a trumpet call as well they stir us to action and are only passive themselves because they are forced to be. They have no message of eternal calm to give us. They seem to call attention to the richness of their material, too. Art in the Occident is all bound up with luxury, but in Asia, Art flees from it. Objects such as those we have been passing in review are not by any means to be considered as mere craftsmen's successes, and not one of our potters even if no secret of the oven be hid from him could produce their equals. For they are not to be separated from the ideas which presided over them at their birth, ideas which seem to shine continuously out of their subtle lines and surfaces with that sort of diffused expressiveness which radiates from all intelligent blind faces.

We must also consider the type of men to whom these works of art supplied a need in life. They were priests, governors and Ministers of State, affiliated for the most part to the mystic sects of Buddhism. It is impossible to estimate the rarity and strangeness of the inner refinements of such men in the East. Let us suppose one of them at the further end of his day's work. First he had applied himself to the duties of his administrative work, then, free and jovial, he had welcomed his friends to his gardens and pavilions, but when at last his companions had all taken their leave, did he not grant to himself an audience of far more delicate amenity ? The choicer the friends around him, the greater his politeness on these occasions, but when he was left alone his courtesy bloomed to its full florescence to do honour to himself !

We generally conceive of the spirit of solitude as crabbed, uncivilised, and impossible to get on with. It can be an exquisite achievement however, the summit of a pinnacle. These Sages never broke openly with the world which provided their mundane careers ; their only retirement from it was within themselves. But Art did not allow them to escape quite alone. Art inevitably was with them, rising to sublimation with their souls. In order to remain worthy of the Sages, Art submitted to be denuded of all luxury, purged of all that is gross, and consented to offer them no more than allusions to the beauty of things. And when they paused for a moment in the course of this inward ascension they found beside them these perfect vases, chaste goblets and suave bowls, barely touched perhaps with the frail outline of an engraved flower by way of ornament, chalices of purity, innocence and simplicity, like the white cups of the convolvulus, opening in the morning to brush the hermit's forehead as he presses on, and upwards.

We must turn now to the supreme productions of Chinese art, the great paintings. We know that there were important productions of this nature in China long before our era, and the most ancient that we possess,

the roll preserved in the British Museum is more exquisitely skilled and refined in execution than any other. It seems really to be the original painted by K'ou Kai Tcheu in the fourth century A.D. But it was under the rule of the Tangs, the Sungs and the Yuans of the seventh and thirteenth centuries that this art was to be made manifest in diverse works, some magnificent with the *prestige* of colour, others depending only on tinted inks, but in either case, works of art which are second to none in the whole world. Closely guarded in the recesses of temples and secret collections, they have been revealed to us all the more gradually because, owing to the innumerable reproductions which exist in the art of the Far East, it has been extremely difficult to hit upon the originals or even upon genuine ancient copies.

Now, however, we have had the opportunity of studying these paintings. They are poems for the eye. The objects represented seem to float upon thought, as it were, against the twilight of old silk. A breeze sways the pure silent flowers, and a spirit of fraternity is to be felt in the lines of the drooping leaves bending this way and that in a perfect harmony. Some young women, in a leafy park (indicated faintly) are exchanging smiles which are as acute and subtle as the shadowy crescent moon deep in an autumn evening sky. Solitary hermits meditate among the mountains so far merged into nature itself that their bodies are kindred with the writhing outlines of trees and the angular surface of rocks. Palaces spring up from above the clouds, so close to the sky, that you cannot tell whether they are meant for the highest dwellings of the human race, or the lowest habitations of the Genii. A landscape presents itself to the eye, with hills and groves of trees, and a boat poised on the water like an insect, but if you go nearer and look into it more carefully, you will see that the whole stretch of the landscape is attached to a small contemplative figure on the bank, like a floating veil fixed at one point only. Or else you get Buddhist work, portraits of priests,

or the famous cascade, which is in the Museum of Kyoto, a sovereign example of the painting of blind forces of nature.

Then as art became more decadent, the subjects became more complicated and were enriched with detail : peacocks appear, spreading out their parterres of feathers, the phœnix takes up a pose of prudish stiffness upon her scarlet feet, the unicorn walks on the tips of his black cloven hoofs, rocks become fantastic piles of turquoise. But here again you see mountains as simple in form as Arab tents, and mark, how the wild geese dart through the air towards those ponds, and see how that wind-swayed leaf transmits its shuddering to the heart of the solitary pilgrim !

These works vary immensely according to their schools and their periods from the royal plenitude of the art of the Tangs, to the almost tremulous delicacy of the Sungs. They have some characteristics in common however. They are all set high above the short-sighted art of little masters, with its assiduous devotion to the outer shells of details, which entirely fails to capture the essence of them. It is common to all art of the Far East to take everything seriously : man does not believe himself all-important or place himself on a pedestal there. In Chinese and Japanese art you come upon representations of birds and beasts so replete with life, so wonderfully developed from the inner essence of the creature, that it would be inconceivable to find them in countries where a belief in metempsychosis was not equally widespread. When, at the end of the eleventh century the great Li Lung Mien gave himself up to the representation of horses, he put so much fire into his work, and identified himself so closely with his models that a *bonze* warned him to give up this work unless he wished to be re-born as a horse.

Too often art in the Occident confines itself to the representation of isolated things, withdrawn from the surrounding universe, the very frames of our pictures

are a symbol of this voluntary isolation. Here, on the contrary, at any rate, during the great periods, painters were able to be interested in the smallest details, in the folds of a pebble for instance : but though they studied the infinitely small, they did not descend to littleness. *They could always discern the play of elementary forces running through appearances.* Although they bestowed far more love and interest upon things than we do, they were far less the dupes of them. The world is to them far more profound and at the same time far less real than to our eyes. Inspired by Buddhism and Taoism to believe in the community of existences, in the embrace of the All, they have succeeded in making us feel at one and the same time, the fugitive and the imperishable elements in our beings. Hence the effect which their art makes upon our sensibilities. It rouses a kind of austere emotion in us, unique in character because instead of dissolving into mere feeling, it prolongs itself in thought.

The form is no longer the definite dwelling-place which Greek Art inhabits with so much certainty and resolution, it resembles rather, those silk tents, which Asian potentates have carried in their baggage train on their desert journeys richly ornamented and embroidered, magnificent as palaces, but so light and delicate that the merest breath of air will sway their filmy walls. The signification attached to each object in the paintings helps to unravel the mystery of the whole. The bamboo stands for wisdom, the crane for longevity, the pine for life immortal, a pair of mandarin ducks for conjugal fidelity. This liberal use of symbolism which later on became hurtful to art ensured the existence of an ideal signification for every image.

Sometimes an almost incredible refinement and intricacy of tones is to be found in these paintings, but without detracting from their spiritual majesty. There are Chinese masters as indefatigable in their researches, as much given to the most subtle investigation as Leonardo

da Vinci, and like him they were not painters only. Some of them were priests, others were Ministers of State and one was an Emperor. After having fulfilled their official duties they turned to the humanities for self-expression. Their works of art were detached from them as easily as a leaf falls in autumn, yielding to the slightest breeze, and yet . . . bearing witness to all the power of their vitality.

Under these circumstances we may well understand that nothing would induce these artists to traffic in their creations.

One of them, Wang Mung Tuan, was intractable on this point. One night as he was sitting at home in solitary meditation, the notes of a flute came flowering upon the silence, notes so pure, so rare that Wang was stirred to emotion and went out to seek the musician. Through the quiet shades of night he made his way to the source of the crystalline stream of notes, and recognised in him an amateur to whom he had obstinately refused to sell one of his pictures. This man had come to show him that he was worthy of the gift of it.

In order to complete this too hasty summary of Chinese art we must go back to the sculpture of the Buddhist grottoes through which the influence of India and even of Greece was brought to China. We must look beyond the hollow forms of more recent art in China to find the virile and grandiose style, which represents the six chargers of the Emperor T'ai Tsung in *bas-relief*. This monument of antiquity only reveals itself slowly to us, little by little the monster-guardians of the tombs emerge from their surroundings, and with their bodies modelled in one mass and their open jaws roaring out mute evidence of their clamorous neighing, they seem less works of art than the petrified beasts of an epoch. The great Roman China of the Hans, pompous and official, but magical, lives again in the scenes carved

behind the huge beasts on the stones of the funereal vaults.

Something else takes us back to this, and even further back still, the sight of those ritual vases of a most imposing plenitude of outline, or those little bronze animals sometimes incrusted with turquoises, whose style is so free and so great that the thousands of years they have already existed have not been able to diminish their vitality. They will never be old or tired. To tell the truth there are few opportunities of seeing anything like them, even in China. The little museum of Pekin is not as interesting as it ought to be. If I go there often it is less for the sake of the museum than because it gives me an excuse to enter the Imperial City, where the museum is situated.

There is no question there, of the heights of art in which the soul of China is set free. On the contrary in the Imperial City you can only contemplate the great ordered China where everything is strictly in its place. I pause at midday in the shelter of a narrow patch of shade at the edge of immense courts which seem to fill up and block out the vast brilliancy of light. The torrid sunshine seems to neglect human beings for the moment and to have no dealings with anything but the monuments and their immovable positions. As if stupefied by the vast, unvarying dazzle of the noon, the rectangular palaces rise up in rivalry with each other, some borne skyward on great foundations of dull rose-colour, while others are lifted, but not so high, on white marble terraces of more mundane elegance of design. The light glazes their sumptuous yellow tiles so visibly that you might exclaim that they are drenched with it and that it is running off them in streams.

Bronze lions are grimacing violently on their plinths at the foot of these grandiose buildings which are almost monotonous in their exactitude and perfect correctness, and if I could examine the wall decorations of their halls and chambers I should find the serpentine wriggle of the dragon everywhere.

Here then, we find that convulsion has been made to stand in contrast with absolute rigorous, self-control; and it seems as if all the monsters of Delirium had been set as guards over the palaces of Order.

But just as this architecture is uninventive, so is this appalling animal *Chinoiserie* unimaginative. We must conclude that a vast gulf yawns in this august and gloomy combination, between the principles of invariable wisdom and the tangled coils of a limited imagination. Contemplating this gulf the Occidental mind struggles to discover a personal affirmation of what the Orient *means* by it. But in vain. The proud palaces of the Imperial City enclose a vast absence. There is no reply.

CHAPTER III

It is not only the art of a nation which gives us insight into its soul. Religion does this to an equal degree. Amongst the houses in the thick of a town, the temples open up shafts of ingress to the very centre of the civilisation of the race under observation. In the temple of the Lamas at Pekin, services carried on with groaning and wailing put us in touch with the whole of primitive magic by means of the Buddhist rites. Taoism is also full of magic. The only temple where neither magic nor prayer is admitted is the Temple of Confucius which I revisited this morning.

I wanted to return first to the chamber that they call the Hall of the Classics. It is in a courtyard planted with old trees, a square building surmounted by a cupola rather like a great golden egg. It is surrounded by a little moat, spanned by absurd little marble bridges, which in this case, as in so many others bring in an ivory note which is pleasant among the varied reds of Chinese architecture.

It was a fine day, some crows were cawing and a magpie fluttered laboriously from one tree to another. I walked right across the court through the grasses for the pleasure of looking once more at one of the most charming monuments in Pekin. It is a portico with three bays. There are several copies of it in the neighbourhood, but not one of them has been carried out with such happy effect as this one. Consisting of two identical faces and hardly deeper than the thickness of a wall, it rests on a base of white marble which is continued as a border round the three doors, and on this border a light trailing plant is just indicated with flowing

lines of the chisel. At the top of the red wall, whose tint has been deliciously subdued by the work of Time, there is a dazzling facing of porcelain in green and yellow, and nothing in natural force has availed to suppress these ardent colours which surround, almost too riotously, the horizontal marble tablet engraved with characters from the skilful and experienced design of an Emperor. Noble, gay and gallant this monument is a masterpiece of the art of a Court.

As I was drinking in the effect of the colour scheme this morning, with renewed zest, the note of sheer completion was added to it when a raven alighted on the cornice making a patch of glossy black. I then went on to the temple itself; it was already very hot as I passed into another courtyard which, with its parched verdure, uprising columns, and its stone turtles with huge fins, plying laboriously in the soil, presented once again that air of antiquity and decay which is proper to Chinese things. Only the glazed tiles shone out like fields of ripe maize, at harvest time.

I went into the temple, and was immediately bathed in calm, and in mighty and solemn violet shade.

At first you are so lost in the abstraction of this building that you positively feel cold although high summer may be blazing outside. The great red columns go speeding up to the roof, and I perceived that the spiritual presences are signified by tablets only. That of Confucius presides over the altar, while those of the four associates, the twelve philosophers and the seventy-two disciples are placed at a respectful distance from it. It is here that the President now, instead of the Emperor, offers up a solemn sacrifice once every year, assisted by various great functionaries, before the assembled school-children of the city and with all foreigners rigorously excluded. Then the ritual music breaks forth, not that which agonizes the ears of the stranger in the street, but the cold and prudish accents which have been duly calculated for the reproof and discipline of men's moral being. This

unique ceremony is probably only a concession to the public, with the object of reminding it of the respect due to the Founder. Respect is the only breath of life in the deadly emptiness of this Temple.

But Confucius has dominated the Chinese soul, and since the coming of the Republic there has been some question of making his religion compulsory. One cannot attempt to approach China without attempting to define Confucianism.

Now the melancholy side of fame is to be found in the fact that those beings who have exercised the greatest influence over men spend all their strength thus, and end by depending for their glory on our imaginations and almost upon the exercise of our will-power. We are faced by the alternative of perhaps seeing their glory fade if we confine ourselves to what we know to be certain about them, or if we make them live vividly again we may be creating a fictitious image.

Confucius we know collated only from ancient texts, and this trait is a signpost in his character from the first, but his labours perished in the great destruction of manuscripts in 213 B.C. With tremendous pains, the losses were gradually made good, but, naturally, not without gaps and variants, and thus the only rescension that we have is far from being entirely reliable. We must add to this the succession of different schools of Confucianism, the superfluity of commentators, and last but not least, the ambiguities of translations which have hampered European students considerably. It is impossible for us to get at the precise meaning of the most important words of the doctrine, words which have been rendered for us as humanity, loyalty, charity, and so forth.

There is no doubt that we are moved by these ancient pronouncements : they resound through the ages. But it is as difficult for us not to credit them with a profound meaning, as it is difficult for us to pin them down with

clear precision. They are like bells still hanging in a ruined tower to which we have fitted clappers, and when we admire their deep notes, we do not consider that it is probably the sound of our own thoughts that we are admiring.

Seu-Ma Tsien, the great annalist of the Court of Han, who inclined towards Taoism himself, has left an account of the life of Confucius. Many of the characteristics that he credits him with are common to all the Sages of old. Confucius, like so many of them, was cautious, rather timorous and very much bent on maintaining an attitude of strict moderation ; the modern man, openly abandoning himself to all the demons which attend his soul, even to the point of stirring them up if they do happen to be dormant, simply cannot form any conception of this circumspection of antiquity, this terror of unchaining the forces of evil. Confucius gave such a high place to music in his philosophy because he looked upon it as a moderating and temporising influence in the soul of man.

For the rest he seems to have been both timid and tenacious, ambitious and rather paltry. In spite of the disgust he excited by it he was never tired of trafficking in the savings made by good government, and he had no doubt of being able to establish the reign of virtue if only he were given absolute power.

As we look back at him down the ages we see more than a little resemblance in him to our modern intellectuals. Like them, he was avid of power. It is often said that scholars and sages actually envy those who are joyful and successful in voluptuous pursuits, but to tell the truth it is the power that the sages crave for, not the pleasure. Only the great thinkers can live by thought alone. Confucius is the type of the sage without detachment : he could not renounce the hope of ruling over men, indeed he lived for it.

It is this which makes him so small in the eyes of the Taoists, whose greater contemplative and perceptive powers pierce the actualities which brought Confucius to

a standstill. Far from setting themselves up as sages the Taoists were careful to avoid every appearance of it. Engulfed in the crowd, with all their wisdom unknown and unsought, they are like vessels which have gone to the bottom with all their treasure on board. There is nothing to distinguish them from the humblest of the labouring class.

Sometimes in the course of one of those naïve peregrinations when the Master travelled from kingdom to kingdom to spread abroad his formulæ, attended by a few disciples, he would encounter one of these mysterious thinkers, and throwing off the disguise of being an ordinary man for a moment, the Taoist would sting the credulous philosopher with some dart of piercing thought, and, leaving him thunderstruck, would vanish into the crowd.

One day when Confucius was playing on the sonorous stone[1] a vendor of herbs who was nothing more nor less

[1] "When Confucius happened to hear on a certain occasion some divine Chinese music, he became so greatly enraptured that he could not take any food for three months afterwards. The sounds which produced this effect were those of Kouei, the Orpheus of the Chinese, whose performance on the 'King'—a kind of harmonicon constructed of slabs of sonorous stone—would draw wild animals around him, and make them subservient to his will.

"According to their historical records, the Chinese possessed their much-esteemed 'King' 2200 years before our Christian era, and employed it for accompanying sacred songs of praise. It was regarded as a sacred instrument. During religious observances, at the solemn moment when the 'King' was sounded, sticks of incense were burnt. It was likewise played before the Emperor, early in the morning when he awoke. The Chinese have long since constructed various kinds of 'King,' by using different species of stones. Their most famous stone selected for this purpose is called 'Yu.' It is not only very sonorous, but also beautiful in appearance. The 'Yu' is found in mountain streams and crevices of rocks. The largest specimens found measure from two to three feet in diameter, but of this size specimens rarely occur. The 'Yu' is very hard and heavy. Some European mineralogists, to whom the missionaries transmitted specimens for examination, pronounce it to be a species of agate. It is found of different colours.

"The Chinese consider the 'Yu' particularly valuable for musical purposes, because it always retains exactly the same pitch. All other musical instruments are, they say, in this respect unreliable; but the tone of the 'Yu' is neither influenced by cold nor heat, nor by humidity nor dryness.

"There are, besides the 'Yu,' three other species of sonorous stone esteemed in China. Of these the 'Kiang-che' is especially noteworthy on account of its metallic sound.

"Sonorous stones have always been used by the Chinese also singly as rhythmical instruments. Such a single stone is called 'Tse-king.'"

(*Catalogue of Musical Instruments in South Kensington Museum*).

than one of these unknown philosophers paused to listen to this music which revealed a soul.

"He who plays thus," said the Taoist, "has a heart. But since no one appreciates it let him resign himself to the fact!"

Confucius never resigned himself. And in order to gain influence over the human race he would consent to take steps which were not approved. A celebrated woman favourite having desired to see him, he agreed to visit her, though this proceeding on his part appeared very much out of character. But what professor has ever resisted the invitation of a beautiful lady? In this matter libertines know better how to defend themselves. The Master therefore kept the appointment very punctually and when he was introduced into the chamber where the lady was awaiting his arrival behind a curtain, he knew that she was there by the tinkling of her jade earrings as she made her reverences to him.

Another time when Duke Ling was driving out with his favourite Nan-tse and a eunuch, the Master allowed himself to be pressed into service as their escort, but he retained his freedom in thought, at least, as he sighed out mentally: "Where is that man who loves virtue as much as a beautiful woman?"

To judge from some of the observations preserved for us by his disciples he must have been a skilful psycho-analyist. Here is a remark which is permanent because ageless: The Sage said: "Men and women servants are the most difficult class of all to deal with. If you treat them with familiarity they become undisciplined immediately. And if you keep them at a distance they feel resentment and hatred."

To a man who was taking no steps to amend his life, and excused himself by alleging insufficient strength, the Master replied: "Those who are not strong enough to go the whole way will go half, but what *you* lack is goodwill." "The man of high character and ability," he pronounces in another admirable saying, "lives at peace

with the common herd, though he is not of the herd." He was not lacking in the stately playfulness which occasionally unbends the sages of all times. When a certain king tried to get an interview with him Confucius for once refused the invitation, and added this quite charming little comment: "It is quite natural for the bird to choose his tree! But the tree cannot choose his bird!"

And yet, this man who died in despair at his impotence to gain his end of reforming the human race, is an example of one of the most extraordinary posthumous successes that the world has ever known. During a long procession of centuries he has given the spiritual law to a vast nation. From the sovereign to the humblest water-bearer not a soul escaped his influence and when we consider the perpetual menaces to which all civilisation is exposed it is impossible to regard one of the greatest organisers of order that the world has ever seen without respect.

Taoïst meditations and Buddhist mysticism sometimes obscured his doctrine, but when these mists were dispersed he became as before: "The Master of all the ages, the support of Heaven and Earth and the Preserver of the human race." Even conquerors submitted to his ascendency. No human types are more sensible to the majesty of an ancient organisation than barbarians. The Frankish chiefs at the very moment when the Empire was at their mercy were proud to assume the mantle of Roman dignity. The Mongols, though masters of China, bowed the knee to the Scholars.

In spite of invasions and the furious assaults of innovators, Confucius presided over a social unity so well concerted, that the spectacle of this immense harmony is really an enchantment. The great design of Chinese society which at first one only admires for its exactitude assumes a certain attractiveness on closer

inspection. Surely it is a vast multitude bound by silken threads! It seems as if the problem of civilisation had never been more perfectly solved, nor with such dextrous elegance, *because the disorderly element which exists everywhere else, only held in check by fear, had disappeared altogether in China*, and there was no need for constraint of anyone because every one seemed to be converted. China really was the country which presented a perfect surface-view of society. The same law applied to men and things.

Upon a certain day of the year the Son of Heaven went forth to usher in the seasons. The dishes were placed on the banqueting tables according to the points of the compass; everything was prescribed for official interviews even down to the looks to be exchanged. As only the literate could win respect, physical force itself was not happy unless polished: the very generals were proficient in the arts of poesy and elegant prose. The very brigands piqued themselves upon their observance of the rites on the highways. A specious modesty was observed in every respect. For example if a man were asked how old he was, he would never answer without adding gloomily that he had lived all those years to no purpose. And while princes in other parts of the world when making proclamations to their peoples make use of the most grandiloquent terms with regard to themselves, the rulers of China in addressing their subjects treated themselves as insignificant personages. No act escaped the yoke of ceremonial: even dying was called "making one's bow to the world."

What lay behind all this imposing parade? "The rites," said Tchung-Tchou in his famous harangue to the Emperor Ou in 140 B.C., "were sent from Heaven. As Heaven is immutable so are the rites."

The rites certainly do spring from the association of man with the universal harmony. The man who accomplishes the rites punctually, imitates the regularity of the seasons, the days, the stars, and in a certain sense compels

that regularity, for he is a participator in the marvel, the magic of the ordinance of the universe.

But just because of the infallible regularity of the rites, they necessarily constitute a code of manners rather than a moral doctrine, and when this code is too immovable, instead of being a menace to lower instincts, it becomes a most effective cloak to them. No doubt all civilisation is calculated on the basis of imposing at least an appearance of virtue upon society, even if that virtue has no real existence, or to put it a little more crudely: civilisation *may* be organised hypocrisy.

And the rites have made possible the most complete separation between the form and the spirit, between feeling and acts, that has ever been experienced anywhere. A European who had lived many years in this country and had a vast experience of the life, told me that Chinamen had often complained to him of the insupportable discomfort or wretchedness that they suffered under the authority of their fathers. "Well, why don't you split off, and live independently?" "Impossible!" was the invariable answer. "What about filial piety! What *would* people say! But if only he would die!" And sometimes they do not restrict themselves to the wish, but have the audacity to ask the foreigner in question for some means of procuring the desired event.

But nothing can illustrate this subject so vividly as an anecdote of Father Huc's which I will relate briefly. This excellent observer had made a friendly acquaintanceship, in a town of the southern part of the Empire, with a cultivated schoolmaster who appeared to him to be of a less insensible nature than the majority of his compatriots. One day when Father Huc was sending off a mail to Pekin, his friend's native city, he inquired whether he could not dispatch any letters for the schoolmaster. "Yes," said the latter after a moment's thought, "I ought to send a letter to my old mother. It must be nearly four years since I last wrote to her." The missionary naturally urged him to do it at once. "At

once," he promised and calling one of his little pupils, who was preparing a lesson in the next room he said: "Take your writing-brush, and write a letter to my mother from me." In a few minutes the child came back with the letter already sealed up. The missionary could not conceal his astonishment when he saw that the schoolmaster was not going to take the trouble to read it. "What should I do that for?" said the latter. "This boy knows what he is about and is certain to have used the most approved formulas!"

Confucius however seems really to have loved virtue for its own sake and to have waged war against hypocrisy of this nature. But to take rank as one of the Masters of humanity it is not enough to have reiterated good counsels with infinite conviction, it is not even enough to emit a few words one day which might compare with certain passages of the Gospels.

A Master of humanity must pronounce a new truth.

The great leaders of systems of morality are gifted with the same power of making all things new, as the great artists. Just as the latter reveal to us the things which are before our eyes all the time, so the former discover the existence of an inner life for us. Confucius cannot take this rank. Far from being comparable to Jesus, or to Buddha, he is typical of that moderation in which he made himself eminent, which forbids the individual to develop himself for his own escape into Power and Glory, whether mundane or unearthly. He is not unlike Socrates in some respects, for he has the same disinclination for the higher planes of speculation and the same affinity for human and domestic sagacity.

But Socrates gave quite a different kind of liberty to man. In the great dilemma which invariably harasses great organisers Confucius allowed the principle of order to tyrannise over life. Man was bridled and bitted and harnessed. Filial piety as instituted by Confucius simply

reduces the adult to childhood. If you want to be convinced of this let me show you some of the pictures which represent the twenty-four principal characteristics of this virtue. Here, you see a child, naked to the waist and surrounded by a whirling cloud of insects while a personage with a beatific expression is fanning himself, a little way off. The child is Ou-Mung who is acting as a bait to the mosquitoes, so that they shall leave his father in peace. Here is an old man of demented appearance capering between two overturned buckets, in front of a man and woman who look even more crazy than he does. It is Lao Lai-tsen who is playing the clown at the age of seventy in order to entertain his parents !

From the very beginning Confucius defines the limits of the average Chinese soul by his rather scanty flow of wisdom and his fine correct mediocrity.

Now re-read one of the great Hindu poems, the "Bhagavad-Gitâ," for example, and can you deny that you feel throughout the heaving pulsations of the sublime ? Cataracts of thought go roaring down, under rainbows of poetry. There is nothing to be compared to this grandiose torrent in the most important Chinese texts : for China lacks the sublime in the same proportion as India overflows with it.

Confucianism has never inspired the arts, being infinitely less generous than Buddhism, and infinitely less profound than Taoism. It is entirely a social creed, but can wisdom be supreme wisdom when it has never been the food of the great solitary souls ?

Modest, delicate and exact the Confucianist sage is a perfect performer of his part ; he knows how to acquit himself whatever may befall him ; his doctrine suffices for anything which can possibly overtake him without maintaining in him that magnificent superabundance by which the great moral beings know themselves for what they are. Confucius remains a pattern, he has never been capable of revelation. Limited to reiterating the wisdom of the Ancients he has never been more than a great pupil.

True, he has been an admirable posture-master and he has made disciples such as those celebrated censors who after having protested against the abuses of a reign regarded themselves bound to punish themselves by committing suicide for the crime of attacking apparent order out of love for genuine order. They died with the fortitude of philosophers and the discretion of men of the world.

But the system of Confucius has never had enough independence to be able to exist beyond the immense circle whose soul it epitomises. It has had no influence in the tributary countries of China, or in Japan, which is near enough to receive the doctrine and different enough to revivify it with a spirit of chivalry through which it might be born again. Confucius has not been able to touch one soul outside his own wide circle and so after admiring the vastness of his Empire, we are reduced to wondering why it is so limited.

If he has not opened a way into the heart of life has he been more successful in the domain of the intellect? When, after the Revolution, China wavered, doubting which road to take, and where to plant its hesitating soul, it seemed at first, that it ought to find its abiding-place before the tablet of the Sage. At the very moment when it seemed that the rites themselves would be deserted Confucius appeared to draw fresh life for his religion from a great positivism. Can he sustain this rôle?

There is no doubt that he shows a touching love of scholarship, he speaks encouragingly of the power of reason, but he mixes it up vaguely with the rest of his system and we can never perceive any real effort at method in his bequest to mankind. The Greek Philosophers were also surrounded by all manner of superstitions, and they flourished their undeveloped philosophy heroically, just as Æneas brandished the sword that was too short

among the phantoms. That was not the position of Confucius. The received interpretation since the thirteenth century credits him with atheism, but he himself seems to have believed all that was believed in his day and he honoured the Genii with a willing heart believing that they formed the completion of a solemn hierarchy. We should, no doubt, be always grateful for an example of reverence from a great man. It is thus that he convinces us of the reality of his power leaving the petty triumph of irreverence to far lesser men. But this duty accomplished the real Sage is the dupe of nothing. We do not feel sure of this in Confucius' case.

One of the most curious chapters in *Entretiens Philosophiques* describes his delight when, with swaying sleeves, he abandoned himself to the intoxication of ceremonial. On reading these lines we cannot restrain a slight smile, nor can we refrain from fearing that the philosopher was carried away by his own good example. He seems to have been the only Sage in the whole of Asia, where the power of penetrating appearances is so widely spread, who had no second-sight, who stopped at the surface of things.

No doubt at the first glance the old scholastic Empire over which he presided was a magnificent spectacle ; an Empire where only the men of learning had power, and where the system of examinations fished up every submerged talent from the depths of the whole nation. But in reality this magnificence was only a matter of appearances. The unrestrained admiration of the Ancients simply brought everything to a standstill ; everything was referred back to the great past. Education in China has simply become a loading of the mind with matters learned by heart. The training of character goes hand in hand with the cult of the rites and is as void of thought as the rites are void of feelings. This bookworm knowledge is unfortunately accompanied by that pitiable vanity which so often seems inseparable from it. When we consider the lengths to which a clever professor can push the *amour-propre* of one who has been a successful pupil,

we can well imagine the pedantic arrogance of some of these old Chinese doctors convinced of their own merit by the undeniable evidence of examination results.

In China this exclusive power of men of letters has not given the best results. It only succeeded in raising an imposing *façade*, and when the force of all Europe and of Japan was sent to batter it down, the Emperors countered the course of events by their edicts until those events became too disastrous to be covered up with words.

In Japan during the last few centuries men have been tempered like steel, in a way that has not come to pass in China. This is because in Japan there already existed a military and chivalrous spirit of feudality, submissive to the most extreme exactions of a high sense of honour, which never failed to support its ideal in its actions. When Japan was obliged to transform itself suddenly from an ancient to a modern organisation, its aristocracy was able to furnish a group of great men who had all the virtues and the abilities necessary to conceive of the problem and to solve it.

China to-day is on the brink of the same precipice. But so far it has not produced the men capable of dealing with the situation.

We find in Taoism the depth which is lacking in Confucianism, its opposite in almost every way. The principle of Taoism comes from India certainly, but China has enriched it with ideas and sentiments which are wholly her own. Confucianism would never have been able to take advantage of any Adept to be compared to Lie-tsen or the great Tchoang-tsen whose genius and gallant power still flash like forks of lightning through the mists of translations and sometimes remind one of old Heraclitus. No one has ever abused the vanity and deceptiveness of action with more force and irony than that philosopher.

The Taoist leaves all, in order to find all. He sinks into the crowd and annihilates himself in the whole mass of it. The Confucianist who is incapable of any such mental process, seems to start by inciting man to keep a guiding hand on events. But he attributes such preponderating power to Heaven that fatalism is the result. Everything points to the desirability of retirement and self-effacement for the Sage. The disciple of Confucius will only act in order to protest when evil becomes a scandal, and his usual protest is simply suicide..

Action in the East is despised; profoundly despised, and is abandoned to the use of the passion-driven and the intriguers. The three summits of Asia are thought, art and dream; and soaring high above everyday life these three peaks seem to have no more connection with it than the mountain-tops that you see in Chinese paintings, which are always separated from the earth by long bars of rolling cloud.

Guided by a Frenchman who has both a scholar's and a poet's knowledge of Asia we went this afternoon to visit a little Buddhist temple in the south-west district of the Chinese quarter. Pekin is so vast in circumference that it embraces large tracts of country. To reach the temple you pass between maize and millet fields, and beyond that you see groves of trees and the sky reflected in the mirrors of lakes. Then houses spring up again, and so you come to the temple.

We went into it. It is called the Temple of the Garden of the Law. Open chambers look out upon courtyards planted with sophoras and the tree of life. I went into one of the most important of these chambers. There were the usual lofty Buddhist statues standing round the walls; a few steps brought you to their overhanging masses of golden bronze, so smoothly and simply modelled that a single lamp beside each of them reveals every undulation of one side of the great body.

Their smiles float like lotus-flowers upon the tranquil gloom.

On each side of the chamber smaller tinted statues are ranged. They are the images of the eighteen *arhats* who are the most important saints of the Buddhist religion. At the end of the hall is a dais where, on an appointed day, the *bonzes* mortify the flesh by burns applied to their shaven crowns. Lying against the wall I saw huge drums, where thunder is latent, to be roused by the slightest touch. I rejoined my companions in one of the courtyards. A cedar-tree spread its plateaux of dark blue-green over our heads. There is one pavilion for the drum and another for the bell which regulate the hours of the rites.

A priest then came up to us, a miserable specimen of a man, but brisk and lively, and led us into a little chamber where an obese statue sat, and seemed to laugh. It was the familiar sensual face which the Chinese have given to Maitreya, the Buddha of the future. Only the Lamas still give him sublime stature and a noble look. In their temples he is a Colossus, a standing Colossus, who seems to be staring the future in the face and reading it from the first page to the last.

A lighted wick was floating on a basin of dark smooth oil before the hilarious image here : the *bonze* performed a little celebration for our benefit, lighting joss-sticks and laughing all the time. Suddenly he glided rapidly away from us and ran to the pavilion of the bell and very soon we heard its low full note which resembles the lowing of cattle. Bells in Asia never have the gaiety and exuberance which makes them the heralds of a fête with us ; the slow, monotonous and dreary bells that I have heard in Pekin seem better calculated to enervate the soul than to excite it ; they do not rouse you, they send you to sleep.

Some priests of higher rank now came forward and led us away to partake of tea. As one of our party spoke Chinese very well, they plied him with questions about

the rest of us and when my turn came I observed their frank, familiar eyes fixed on me with childish curiosity. Seeing that I did not understand a word of the conversation they tried to console me with an extra share of smiles. I remarked on the little sandalwood desks on which they deposited their books, and they asked my friend to tell me that they would get some of them and give them to me if I would come and see them again. We finished our tour of the temple in their company. One elaborately decorated chamber was brilliant with pieces of ancient silk and the fringe of great parasols which hung down from the ceiling; and the walls were hung with paintings where gods were depicted moving here and there in confusion and waving their supernumerary arms. We passed into another room lined with memorial tablets, and on questioning our guides we learnt that many of them were dedicated to men who had fallen in the Great War.

I really think that these poor *bonzes* were quite incapable of forming an adequate idea of the struggle which decimated Europe, but it had been enough for them to know that men were being cruelly victimised somewhere, and they had included these victims in their prayers. This could not fail to move us and it was an epitome of all the gentle influences of this sacred place. However degenerate Buddhism may become it will never be quite faithless to its origin since something of the Founder's boundless compassion still survives.

Silence now fell upon the priests, and as the gathering twilight descended upon them like a dim veil they looked like a frieze of figures in a fresco. And how far from us they seemed! Yet though an abyss yawned between themselves and us, they looked across it with a timid, friendly air, and through that vast separation they smiled at us.

We then went on to visit a neighbouring mosque. As is well known, there are about twenty million Mahomedans in China, who monopolise certain trades

and occupy a quarter of their own in every town. The first thing we came to was a school and we were surrounded by a swarm of noisy children who looked cleaner than the average Chinese child is wont to do. There was one little girl with beautiful eyes, which is a rare sight in a Chinese crowd. When we came to the mosque itself we received a very different impression from that which the Buddhist temple had left with us. Down there, the temple, was rambling and open, open to gods and man, here in dark, secret Islam the temple consisted of one plain empty building where foreigners are forbidden to set foot. We were barely allowed to look in through the door.

This mosque dates from the Ming Dynasty and was restored under Kien Lung. The interior is charming. The low roof is supported by five ranks of columns, which in course of time have all come to lean one way, and this slight inclination seems to soften the severity of the whole and give it an aspect of friendliness. At the further end, a yellow ray of sunlight lit up the empty niche of the *mihrab*. In the middle, with his legs crossed on his mat, an old man was praying, so desiccated and motionless that he looked like a statue of old wood. The sound of our arrival did not even make him turn his head. But others of the faithful, merchants of the quarter, bade us welcome with the usual amiability of the Orient, exchanged cards with us and offered us tea, and we began one of those uneasy conversations which are less like a real meeting than signs exchanged by men at a distance with a wide river flowing between them.

When Paris came up for discussion, they spoke with much interest of a certain street, where, as it appeared, all the Mussulmen of Paris live. They even gave us their version of the name of this street, but, hard as I tried, I could not succeed in recognising the name and locating it. So unless I discover it for myself I shall never know where the Mahomedans of Paris have chosen to live.

On emerging from the precincts of the mosque, we

met the school-children again, and also the little girl with beautiful eyes. Conscious that she was noticed, she stopped laughing, and smiled, and seemed to stand out from all the rest like a single flower among the monotonous swaying blades of grass in a field.

A few moments later we were in the street and swallowed up in a Chinese crowd again, that mysterious impenetrable crowd, which reveals nothing. What a contrast to a European crowd of the same classes, which is always a perfect tumult of striking characteristics, each one calling attention to itself whether consciously or unconsciously. Here, you see nothing but a broad stream of calm, or rather, vacant faces, and all these multitudinous presences seem to be nothing but an enormous sum total of absences. Young women slip by in rickshaws, dressed in a jumper blouse and black satin trousers, with their narrow slits of eyes which look as if they had been sewn up and a strange impersonal smile stamped upon their lips, and wearing knots of tuberose in their sleek black oiled hair.

CHAPTER IV

I HAVE already remarked on the beauty of the sunsets at Pekin, but so far I had never seen one to compare with the sunset this evening. I was wandering in one of the quarters I prefer near the Manchu city, where a wide, straight street comes to an end at the tower of the Drum. The tower of the Bell is not far off. But the word tower is a deceptive one in this instance. The tower of the Drum might be better described as a high square palace where you can see the black disk of the drum in the middle of the building standing out of the surrounding atmosphere like the pupil of an enormous eye.

Ruined by the fall of the Empire the nobility of ancient Manchu descent live on in this quarter in their almost empty houses, where they sink into lower and lower depths of poverty without making the slightest effort to alter the course of their life of contemptuous idleness.

I was visiting the "curio" and "antique" shops, lingering, in spite of the falling dusk, for that is the very most charming time of day for this pursuit in Pekin. Responding to the weary, subtle smile of an old dealer I had entered his shop, a long narrow room, whence the light was departing like a piece of stuff that is being pulled away. But innumerable tiny things were making an effort to hold it: an enamelled buckle, an agate pendant, a flower carved from mother-of-pearl, caught and held some last departing ray and playing with the eye of the seeker, ceaselessly attracted it, only to disappoint.

I was thoroughly enjoying this intriguing amusement when, on returning to the door, I suddenly perceived a vast splendour of purple and gold unfurled in the sky, blazing above the roofs, and I knew that there must be

a magnificent sunset. I rushed to the tower of the Bell and went up to the first storey. There hangs the enormous bell which has a legend of its own and proclaims the hours of night to all Pekin ; near it hangs the long horizontal beam, like the battering-ram of sieges in the days of old, which would be used to smite the bell one hundred and eight times a little later in the evening, when the drum in the Drum Tower had announced the opening of the first watch with one hundred and eight beats.

I did not stop to look at the bell, but hastened to the outer parapet. The glory of the sunset was already beginning to depart. A superb violet cloud was spread over the west like a screen, and vast rays of fiery light came pouring and surging from behind it in revolt from its attempt at repression, and stretching far up into the firmament, they touched some soft scattered clouds there and turned them to fire.

Overhead in space I saw a cloud of black specks apparently chasing each other. They were locusts, and the rooks on the tower kept darting out upon them, some snapping up their prey at the first attempt and others showing by their sudden jerks, and darts and swoops that they had missed it, or had only secured it by a violent effort. Directly their beaks closed on the locusts they came planing back to the tower to devour the prey in peace, and before they disappeared behind the slope of the roof I could plainly see the tenuous bodies of the locusts held in their beaks. The rooks of the neighbouring tower, of the ramparts, of the gates, and indeed all the rooks of Pekin were hunting locusts and it struck me then how really useful the rooks were.

And now the sunset light was burning low. The clouds had united into one inky-blue mass which lay heavy on the horizon, but this menace was too far off to disturb the luminous tranquillity of the sky overhead and the evening air around me. Below me, I caught glimpses of confused masses of trees, square courtyards and low houses where the gentle stir of the home life of evening

was beginning. A few lamps, needing darkness to be brilliant, floated against the neutral twilight like pale globes of gold. The town lifted up its quiet voice, not like the roar of our capitals, but the faint hesitating sigh of a town without wheeled traffic, a stifled murmur of voices and cries, where the tap of the little gongs carried by hawkers was always distinguishable, like the chirp of an insect. Some children of the quarter were playing at the foot of the tower and every now and then they would lift up their voices altogether in a strange thin, reedy cry like the note of a flute.

A moon, still swelling to fullness, white, cold and compact, mounted rapidly towards its zenith as if to snatch a vacant throne. The sun had left a stretch of fading light at the horizon which seemed to mourn over the splendour that was no more. The distant cloud-mass was even thicker and more threatening than it had been. The storm which it bore within it was letting loose its fury, but not a sound reached my ears. I could only see an inky mass, split from time to time by zigzags of lightning.

This afternoon I was walking along the main street of the Chinese town. A crowd was lined up on both sides of the street, so I waited to see what was coming. Presently I saw the heads and shoulders of some mounted men in grey uniform commanded by an old officer like a mummy. Over the people's heads I saw these pass, and then came a squad of infantry, followed by several low carts with a man bound on to each of them, guarded by two or three soldiers who squatted round him. These men were being led to execution. They were to be shot, and they wore white canvas shirts stamped with black characters which related their misdeeds or crimes, and gave them some resemblance to the men condemned by the Inquisition as they appear in pictures of the period. They were robbers and marauders who had been taken

in the act, or at any rate they had been arrested as the actual offenders.

One of them, who had a strong brutal face, was staring down the crowd with a sort of motionless violence. Another was a pitiful sight, green and yellow in the face, and impressing me like an animal in a trap longing desperately for the darkness and security of his burrow. The prisoners and firing-party disappeared into the luminous dust-cloud and left me meditating over all I had heard on the subject of the Chinaman's imperturbability in the face of death.

It is not long since shooting was allowed as the method of execution. Until quite recently the executioner decapitated them one after the other, and nothing is to be compared to the fortitude, looking like indifference, with which those at the further end of the row awaited their turn. Once in the days of Yuan cheu Kaï, as the condemned men arrived at the execution-ground, it happened that one of them in a last impulse of self-indulgence had lighted a cigarette, and would have liked to smoke it to the end. As he was the second in the file he asked the last man in the row to change places with him; his request was granted and the smoker having obtained the few instants grace that he needed went calmly to the end of the row, knelt down and finished his cigarette.

What is the origin of this insensibility? Does it come from a crushing sense of the power of destiny? Or from the Buddhist belief in rebirth? Or do they lack imagination to such an extent that they cannot picture, even feebly, the drama of their own end? It all points to the certainty that the individual here is far less jealous of his own person than we are. Very often he thinks more of his family than he does of himself. But the conclusion must always be that the Chinaman accepts the inevitable in a way that would be impossible to us.

About twenty years ago in a southern town serious riots had broken out in which several foreigners had been

killed. A tribunal of European officers sat in judgment over the ringleaders and it is from one of them that I heard this story. A mandarin convicted of having incited the disorder was condemned to death. On hearing the sentence, throwing personal dignity to the winds, he fell at his judges' feet and made wild efforts to soften their hearts. But the president told him coldly that there was no appeal against the sentence. He immediately got up, took a seat and sat fanning himself with placid elegance and perfect indifference until the moment of his end. He had evidently believed that there *was* a chance of reprieve and doubtless had too much contempt of the foreigners to consider himself humiliated in appealing to them. Once certain that his efforts were useless he regained absolute imperturbability.

While thinking these things over again after dinner at the hotel this evening, I began to look round me and it seemed worth while to pause before that spectacle too. Here, too, you feel some of the poetry of long journeys, not that which penetrates to the secret soul of a country, but that of easy travel which mingles different perfumes of the world in its varied atmospheres.

All around me were groups of Europeans, Americans, Chinese and Russians ; dead-beat from the heat and sunk in languor, the groups remained separate and almost defiant. Each group was exchanging information about the other groups. The Russian Revolution with all the muddled strife that it has brought upon Oriental Siberia has opened the way for many adventurers. Associated with the schemes of Semenoff, and in the pay of Japan, they range between Vladivostok and Chita, and sometimes they swoop down on Pekin. They come into the hotel and advance with long sinuous steps like the movements of feline animals. With a guarded expression but acutely on the watch they sweep round a circular glance of inspection, letting their eyes rest on each person, long enough to appraise him, but not long enough to give one the right to object to the scrutiny. This examination

over, they draw in their gaze as a snail draws in its horns and fold it away in the slit between their eyelids.

Sometimes they appear in a uniform, as if a grade, or a state or condition had descended upon them in the night. Next day you will see them in their garments of cotton cloth again, as if the uniform had been a dream.

That giant with a narrow shaven crown and long trumpet-shaped beard lying on his breast which gives him a likeness to the god Ganeça is the Russian general who constructed the railway in Turkestan. Yesterday we had a long talk together. With his yellow-hazel eyes fixed on me, in a veiled and rather sing-song voice and in excellent French he described his impressions and experiences when he was laying down the line across that wild country. His wife comes of a family of French painters naturalised in Russia, and she is a painter herself.

This evening two German-looking Russians with soft doughy faces like boiled puddings are conversing with him, leaning very close to him, their thick lips forming words which are almost inaudible.

Just as Russians fit into their surroundings here as if they were made for them, so do Anglo-Saxons appear absolutely exotic. Their silhouettes stand out as if a hard line were drawn round them, they positively exhale cleanliness though quite unconscious of it; they are prodigal also of that nameless but invincible quality which makes every beholder certain that they have not been absorbed into the country that they are living in as foreigners; that they live there with all its influences running off them, like water off a duck's back. It is not that they lack curiosity altogether, but their curiosity is confined to exteriors and does not appear to penetrate, or try to penetrate, anywhere. I can see some of them now exclaiming over the merchandise which some Chinese have set out round the pillars and they are buying curios, which are not genuine, with the utmost enthusiasm.

As for the Frenchmen here they belong to two separate

types ; one, very voluble and lacking in discretion and decorum, which happily is dying out and comes down to us from the day of the *café* and its frequenters ; the other intensely correct and reserved, imitating the English, in fact ; and mark, that I exempt several charming people from either of these classifications, including my own two companions in whose society we can never forget that France is pre-eminently the country of quality.

A few prudent (one might almost say prudish) diplomats circulate among these groups, exercising immense caution, for knowing what equivocal personages are to be found in this hotel lounge they must at all costs avoid accrediting them by the slightest sign of recognition. It would *never* do to withdraw them from the suspicious shady atmosphere to which they belong !

Through the wide open windows you can see hanging branches and stars, and sitting languidly in the fictitious breeze of the electric fans you drink — and drink — and go on drinking, without ever attaining to that feeling of well-being which gives the body its normal equilibrium.

Some of the foreigners are dancing, in spite of the heat ; some of them to confirm their illusion of belonging to smart society here, which is the great support of most of them and is their main recompense for exile ; the others simply because they like dancing and desire the pleasure of it. A tall American girl, handsome as a Venus without passion, is quite indefatigable. The orchestra has begun to play one of those cheap but potent dance tunes, throbbing with tenderness, which rule over the whole world for a few months at a time and are carried across the oceans on the liners even to the isolated hotels of Australia and the sweltering nights of India. These tunes are powerful magicians. As soon as the charm begins to act you see couples rising to glide in each other's arms ; their bodies obey the spell which sends them drifting and dreaming over the polished floor. Even the women who remain seated let their gaze travel away,

and the soul, which at first resists, finds that it *must* join in, to drink from the cup of dream and nostalgia.

Among many faces here which hold the eye, there are some over which it merely glides, the Chinese faces. The placidity of the Chinese groups stands out in contrast to the general vivacity of the foreigners. Three Chinese girls are dining at the hotel to-night, chaperoned by a Manchu lady, who was once a maid of honour to the Empress Tseu-hi, and having lived in Europe since then has become possessed of a subtle and unfathomable elegance composed of all the qualities which she has selected from two worlds. I conversed with her and with the girls in her charge. I was told that one of them was a poetess, and observing her, I noticed her sickly little face, tired smile and timid eyes behind gold-rimmed spectacles. She had no carriage, no presence.

A little while ago I was introduced to a young poet. He had been in Europe, but since he came back to China, to his literary studies here, he has forgotten everything that he learned abroad, his foreign languages have slipped away little by little ; he is rather like a young seminarist who has been confined to his cell again after a journey round the world. He asked me how many types of poetry we had. I did not know how to explain to him that we did not classify everything by numeration as his literature does. Poets are not souls intoxicated by the wonders of creation in this country, but rather the prisoners of literary erudition where successive poems repeat each other getting thinner and thinner down to vanishing-point like an echo. The poets are held fast in an enchanted palace where they evoke bull-finches on branches of blossom, snow-covered pines, or moonlight streaming in at a door, and to preserve this frail loveliness from the rude hands of ignorance and profanity, the human characters of the poems mount guard with helmet and lance, bristling with strange armour.

To be a poet in China is to withdraw from the grossness of reality above all things, it is to dream dreams which

are finer and more delicate than matter ; and the Master of dreams is the poet.

The young girl poet at the hotel sat somewhat apart from her friends, her attitude betraying both indulgence and aloofness, the very essence of all dying things. Her girl companions were quite different. Just now when I was talking to them their answers came promptly and their glances sparkled with mischief and now they are dancing with spirit and enthusiasm ; they make you feel that they would easily be absorbed into our way of life.

The two Frenchmen with me who are acute observers of Chinese life began to discuss the emancipation of young Chinese women and gave me an example of a recent elopement, which seems incredible when you think of the reverence in which the conventions were held in the family in question. And yet I think we have no right to be astonished. Wherever customs are no longer nourished by inner virtues we find that formalism collapses at the first impulse from instinct, and the antiquity of the forms only gives prominence to their downfall.

Chinese manners and customs are undergoing a great transformation, especially near the coast and in the classes where the influence of modernity is felt the most. It is the same influence here as all over the world. It stirs up the poor monotonous revolt of individual egoism. The number of divorces is increasing. The ancient constitution of the family is attacked. The populace doubtless preserve their old customs but it is dangerous for a country when the groups which constitute the nation live by utterly different principles. The moment is always drawing nearer when this contrast will explode like a bomb.

A good many students, especially those who have visited America, want to impose laws borrowed from foreigners upon their country. Thus, a Civil Code and a Penal Code have been drawn up which have no reference to the principles on which the Chinese family is founded. For the moment these laws are a dead letter

like many of the others. "But," said I, "what will happen when it is necessary to apply them." "Ah," said one of my companions, "then there will be trouble."

We went on to discuss affairs of the moment. Everything is calm for the moment but Chinese politics are like many other human affairs, in that, just when everything has been arranged, it is found that nothing works. Other crises are bound to explode; indeed the near future is full of them.

My companions had now settled down to tell each other anecdotes, and I was delighted, I felt as if they were shaking off their experiences all over me. They discussed the brief Restoration of the Empire which lasted for thirteen days in 1917. On the night of the 30th June the young Emperor was roused out of his sleep, and led all startled and abashed to the throne room. Most of the great functionaries were there: they had joined the plot, but of confidence they had none, and foreseeing that it would be a losing game for them, the regents actually shed tears. The young Emperor mounted the throne. When old Tchang-hiun, a Manchu of determined character, who had been the principal agent of the Restoration, saw his master in his own place once more, he was quite overcome by his loyalty and threw himself down prostrate before the throne. The rest of the Emperor's supporters continued their discussions, amongst them the reformer Kang-yeou-wei who probably saw nothing but a useful feint in the restoration of the boy monarch. But the Emperor had found himself, and hereditary pride welled up in his being. He took two steps forward, and extending his hand said something to Kang-yeou-wei. The reformer in surprise hesitated a moment and then in his turn fell at the Emperor's feet. This boy standing before the throne of the Dragon in the gloom of the great palace, in the dancing lights and shadows produced by a few flickering lamps was perhaps the last apparition of Imperial majesty in China.

The people of Pekin were overjoyed and the standards

of the dragons were unfurled. Pekin had always stood for the Empire and in order to win it over to the Republic it had been necessary to proclaim that all taxes would be remitted. This *mirage* of a promise had won many adherents to the Republic.

On the very night of the Restoration, one of the most important officials of the Republic considered himself to be in such danger that he fled to the Legation quarter, leaving his family behind to be beleaguered. He rang at the gate of the French Hospital. A nun appeared on the threshold, one of those women who have done so much good here, both in the highest and the lowest classes. Concealing his real name the fugitive begged to be admitted. In spite of the late hour and the strangeness of his demand he was allowed to enter, and soon afterwards retired to bed in perfect security and fell comfortably asleep.

The next day as there was fighting going on in the streets, a young diplomat belonging to one of the allied nations considered it his duty to inquire into the safety of the family of the personage who had always given himself out as a friend of the *Entente*. But as the soldiers of the two factions were at daggers drawn and the fugitive's house was completely barricaded it was absolutely necessary to get a safe-conduct from Tchang-hiun, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Forces, in order to break through and rescue the deserted women and children.

No one knew where Tchang-hiun was to be found. With the consent of his Minister the young man went to consult with the Japanese Minister, who was a very able old man with an extraordinarily acute and subtle mind, always abreast of all the intrigues of the moment and very often holding cues to them. He listened to his visitor with a good grace, approved his plan and smiling his crafty smile could not deny that he could get hold of Tchang-hiun if he liked.

"I will ring him up on the telephone," said the

Japanese. "I won't tell you where he is, but I quite hope to be able to communicate with him."

He left the room and returned in a few moments. "It is all arranged. As a matter of convention there will be a feint of opposition to your passing, but you will be able to get through and bring out your *protégées*."

The young man thanked him and went off in his motor with the interpreter belonging to his Legation. They were brought up short by a barricade of troops when they came near their destination. Further negotiations were necessary and Tchang-hiun was again referred to, but in a very short time the order came through to let them pass. The two Europeans entered the house and the young man passed through all the successive courts until he came to the innermost chamber and the first thing he saw there, the only picture hung by this friend of liberal nations was an arrogant portrait of the Kaiser. It was no time for reflection although useful ones could have been made.

The deserted wife appeared supported by her children weeping and very much alarmed as was quite natural. But behind her came three concubines.

Now by a particularly malicious caprice Tchang-hiun had only given a safe-conduct for the lawful wife and her children and two officers armed to the teeth had accompanied the diplomat and the interpreter to see that this specification in the order was rigidly adhered to. The concubines, however, burst into tears and flung themselves at the young man's feet. One of them was a pretty woman. He made a rapid decision. "Listen," he said to them, "you three shall go first in my car, the troops will think it is my party with the permit, and will let you pass; we will follow behind with Madame here and the children and we shall manage to get through somehow."

And so it was managed. The first car rushed through at lightning speed and no obstacle was put in the way,

but when the second car came along the astonished officers tried to stop it. It was shaken and knocked about and a few shots were fired after it. The legitimate spouse, poor lady, was crouching on the floor of the car with her children, while the two diplomats remained standing on the steps and nothing that they could say to her, availed to make her show herself. At last, however, they got through, and the whole family were lodged in safety at a European hotel.

A message was sent to the *paterfamilias*, still lurking in the French Hospital which is quite close to the hotel in question. He showed none of the joy which he must have felt, and did not ask to see his belongings, but the next day he sent for his concubines. He has since retired from public life and lives as an edifying example of the domestic virtues.

Towards the end of the Empire the Manchu Princes tried to divert themselves with whims and extravagances which recall those of the Roman and Byzantine Emperors, for boredom has only the same old resources everywhere. One of them knew no greater pleasure than to disguise himself as a beggar. He made his horrible toilet with the utmost care, painting on realistic sores, and would take up a position where the crowd passes along beside the Temple of Agriculture. In the evening his valets came to fetch him, wrapped him up, assisted him into his carriage and drove him back to the palace where his joy knew no bounds if he had collected a good sum of money.

Another of these Emperors was wont to woo public favour in the theatres as an actor. You might often see him in green-rooms, which in Chinese theatres are always so littered with properties, nodding plumes, and tufts and glass trinkets that they seem to be more nearly related to the realm of illusion, the stage, than those of our theatres. While he was being "made-up" as the God of War he would begin by chattering familiarly

with the bystanders, but as the " make-up " approached completion he became invested with the spirit of the part and grew motionless and terrible, and sacred, so that no one dared to address him, and he himself spoke no more.

It is impossible to travel about the world and study men without having more and more respect for good manners. It is the only real means of communication between two great civilisations. One meets many young Chinamen who have studied in Europe or in America, who speak our languages and it seems, at first glance, as if they were the men we should get on best with in this country. But you are soon undeceived; as they use our words without giving them the sense we give them, such a conversation is nothing but one long misunderstanding, which can never be cleared up owing to this discordant usage of the same vocabulary entirely at cross-purposes. Though it is not what you would expect, you soon find that these are the Chinese who make you realise most keenly the irreducible differences between the two races.

But when an old-time Chinese scholar meets an Occidental the pains that each will take to show consideration, respect, genuine and mutual cordiality all prove that in spite of the discrepancies between them they are capable of recognising each other's worth, and are worthy to meet each other. Really when they approach each other from this standpoint there is more agreement than disagreement between them. Purged of all confused thinking their very differences become a source of intellectual enjoyment. You often hear foreigners in the Far East conplaining that the excessive politeness of the Chinese and Japanese is a cloak to something very far from being politeness. That is not really the point in question.

Courtesy is not used for the expression of one's inmost

feelings but for the formation of an exterior which shall never fail to be a becoming and decent one to present to the world. The moral value of courtesy is a subject for endless debate. For one thing, it is undeniable that you cannot impose certain outer manifestations upon men without playing upon their inner beings to a considerable degree. It is also undeniable that the more subtle and polished a courteous manner becomes the less connection it maintains with the emotions beneath it and may end by having no more relation to them than the movements of an excellent dancer.

Courtesy is, therefore, decidedly not free from dissimulation, but what good education can afford to leave dissimulation out altogether? As we all know, a man is nothing until he has learnt to dominate his impulses. But when he has got to the point of being able to hide what he feels he is not far away from the experience of an added pleasure, that of affecting to feel something that he does not feel, and also of misleading the excellent people who pride themselves on reading his very soul, and of setting up a shield for the essential secrets of that soul. One might easily construct an aristocratic theory of lying which would be of some use to the Japanese soul and mentality.

And when all is said and done, courtesy remains the most certain proof of the superiority of a civilisation. It refines the exchange of sentiments in friendship and reduces the brutal shock between two hatreds to the delicate art of fencing. It is the great aristocratic hypocrisy which banishes the obscenity of the human beast, and transforms the egoisms and atrocious rivalries of live men into an æsthetic spectacle. Under some circumstances it may become heroism. It scatters precious moments through everyday life like those golden points which gleam in the lustrous surface of lacquer.

I am reminded of a night in the train in Japan when I had opposite to me a family of three, a father, mother and daughter, all spotlessly clean with the cleanliness

which everybody in Japan seems to preserve quite without effort. They hardly ever spoke to each other without that smile, which is not an overflow of the soul, but a protest of the whole being that it is ready to put itself at the service of others. On their return from dinner in the restaurant-car the young girl knelt upon the carriage seat, sitting back on her heels in conversation with her mother for some time. Then after making her several curtsies she prepared herself to sleep. She arranged herself in a very correct posture and poised her glossy black hair, elaborately arranged with the convolutions of a shell, against a little bolster.

The next morning, when the train stopped at dawn in a little wayside station reeking with the damp dripping from trees, I roused myself painfully from uncomfortable slumber and became conscious of my companions again. The father and mother, as neat and spotless as the evening before, were already chatting pleasantly with each other. Then the young girl awoke in exactly the same attitude in which she had fallen asleep the night before and the opening of the flowers outside could not have impressed me with more freshness and simplicity than the opening of her eyes. I cannot do justice to the charm of this irreproachable return to life immediately on waking. I was ashamed of my own animal moroseness in comparison to this flower-like greeting to the dawn.

She made several respectful bows to her parents to which they responded with friendly nods and again the butterfly smile fluttered from mouth to mouth. The sight of these good people together was such a pretty one that I could not make myself believe that they conducted themselves in this way every day. It seemed to me that I must have surprised them on a Sabbath morning of their existence. And yet I knew in my heart that it was nothing of the sort, and this wise and happy little fête was something which happened every morning of their lives.

Chinese courtesy differs a good deal from Japanese courtesy. The former is suave, the latter has a fine edge upon it. That of Japan has descended to the populace from the heights of a warlike aristocracy, imbued deeply with chivalry and absolutely unyielding on points of honour. Behind it we get glimpses of combats, crossed swords and gaping wounds. There is nothing behind Chinese politeness, if we except a few suicides, but pens and fans. But it bears witness to the peaceful condition in which the immense Empire used to exist. Courtesy was the expression of poetry in the China of those days. That poetry has vanished into space, and it is difficult to meet anyone nowadays who can give an adequate idea of the manners of China of yesterday.

But one evening at a dinner which I was attending, as I passed near an old man in a silk cap, black vest and grey skirt, the simplest and most decent dress in the world, I was surprised to hear him address me in the purest French. I was lucky enough to sit beside him at dinner. I had been told that he was more than eighty years old. He certainly did not look it and his conversation betrayed it even less. It was sparkling and untiring with an almost Voltairian agility. In his allusions to our literature I discovered a solid foundation of real knowledge, which he owed to the teaching of the Jesuits I discovered later. But the specially Chinese element in his conversation has a taste for playing almost skittishly with ideas, that learned frivolity which is not frivolous learning ; that delight in touching upon everything without dwelling too long upon anything.

While I watched his sparkling face, overflowing, effervescing with ideas as he talked, he related the incidents of a journey he had made in France under the Second Empire. Or else he discussed the tragedies of Corneille with me, for he had just been re-reading them. Then he began to explain the genius of the Chinese language to me, telling me how every verb can be treated

as a noun. "It is like the TO in Greek before the infinitive," he said briskly.

Do our mentalities change colour under the touch of winged words? I dare not think so. But what a charming illusion this conjunction gave me. It seemed to me that I was dreaming, and that in a cloud-capped region between the guarded frontiers of two hostile countries I passed over a long slender foot-bridge suspended above a gulf with a torrent flowing at the bottom, to a pavilion decorated with long streamers blowing in the wind, and there I found myself face to face with this delightful old man; and in my enchantment at this reunion which wiped out so many causes of difference I gave the bridge a name in Chinese fashion: *The Bridge of the Communion of Men of Letters;* and the pavilion I named: *The Pavilion of Delicious Encounter.*

The light is quite different now and is the harbinger of autumn. Instead of the almost glaucous stream of the summer daylight which drowns things in its depths this changed light is transparent and buoyant and brings everything into relief and prominence, and it seems as if the splendid monuments delighted in it and became more imbued with life, standing out more sharply under its influence, as a drinker springs to his feet excited by a more subtle and potent wine than that which he had been drinking. The crowd in the street looks different too. It has become heavier as the atmosphere becomes lighter. The thicker garments make it a more awkward, substantial affair altogether, and already the people look chilly. The quiet note of black silk is to be seen everywhere, and old wadded jackets and faded mantles appear just like the well-known, well-worn garments which reappear punctually every winter in our provinces, on the persons of the pious residents.

The beardless faces here and the circumspect expression add to the resemblance. But something else confirms

the impression and that is when some procession passes with flags flying in the breeze, flags printed with dragons and chimeras in the most fussy affected taste, which, flying over this mass of wan faces and plain grey skirts, really seems to belong to a population of old maids.

One house where a shop is just opening business is hung from top to bottom with red canvas decorated with Chinese characters in gilt paper, with a mauve and yellow cornice surmounting the whole. At this season of the year, whenever there is any kind of fête the streets are hung with innumerable paper trophies in pale bright colours which stand out in sharp relief against the dull background of the old town : there are baskets made of paper, little airy palaces, mauve paper ducks with yellow beaks and innumerable other objects of the same type, all of them tied to the end of strings, the playthings of the wind before becoming playthings of children.

A naked baby-boy the colour of the wall is dragging along one of these multi-coloured baskets, while his mother with an expressionless face and dressed in black silk, is pulling him along by the hand. Then your eye travels suddenly from these fluttering trifles to the impersonal grandeur of the Imperial Palaces. The swelling roofs rise up into the clear air like permanent tents of the desert, and the sunshine glorifies the lustre of the angular tiaras of tiles. Then you fully appreciate the severe lines of the magisterial design. Like water in canals expressly prepared for it the light seems to flow more easily in the great straight main streets.

He who is truly, and in his soul, a traveller is composed of more than one person. He is student, observer, and loiterer. Each one of them gets his turn, and sometimes the loiterer picks up more valuable information than the enthusiastic student. Just lately I have been wandering constantly in and out of shops and I have not been into

one which has not its piece of Southernwood in water, exhaling a piercing and delicious scent.

I am inquiring into the smaller handicrafts. The arts have perished, but in spite of every attack upon them, the handicrafts continue to flourish like those little branches on a fallen oak, which put forth green leaves, without knowing that their tree is dead. Here, we are in the street of the copper merchants. It is full of cavernous dens where half-nude coppersmiths are hammering the beautiful metal glowing like the dawn. A rack of wooden swords, alternately red and green is the sign of the amourer's forge. Further on small rugs and carpets are hanging out like flags. Another shop is full of musical instruments, some slender, some with swelling curves which make it look like a shipyard full of ships, and what are they but ships of the soul to bear it away on long journeys? The hammers fall, the shuttles move, the sparks fly in the depths of those ancient forges and workrooms. Wherever you go you see great Chinese characters on the walls, which like those dead birds one sees nailed on to doors seem to be only the dried-up skeleton of an idea that was once free, winged and living.

This morning I explored a street as narrow as a corridor running in slight zigzags between low houses, the pavingstones unevenly patched with sunshine and shade. Hanging down on each side there are great tassels of thicklytwisted wool. In this street you can buy the rich velvet flowers and enamelled pins that the women wear in their hair and also those little ornaments much loved by the Chinese, made of kingfishers' feathers, feathers of a magical blue which seem to hold the light. The clever workmen in the shops take up minute pinches of them and apply them to mounts of copper or gilt cardboard. And thus create ornaments of a colour which seems too lovely to be more than an illusion, butterflies of more than lifesize, phœnixes in miniature, hair-bands which might have fallen from the brow of a celestial spirit.

One is reminded of the marvellous pictures in feather-

mosaic of the Aztecs and one wonders whether these two arts have not the same origin. But here it has fallen very low. The craftsmen have only very poor models, their work has no style any longer, for style comes from the period and what aid or inspiration could these last workers in azure hope to find in this century of ours ?

The light was so clear and fresh and pale that I prolonged my walk for the sheer pleasure of it. In one little street I met a wedding procession. Along the walls they had placed glass lanterns on red wooden poles with simplified drawings of fairies and genii produced by one stroke of the brush on the four faces of the lantern. The street was divided down the middle into two even stripes of sunshine and shade. The bride's scarlet chair was blazing in the strip of light, richly embroidered with tufted phœnixes, big bull-finches, and grape-vines with squirrels scampering up and down them. It was in this chair that the young girl herself in her wedding-dress of flowing red satin would soon be transported to her new home, carefully hidden from the public gaze by curtains.

A green chair, also embroidered, but not so richly, was standing modestly on the shady side of the street. One of the Chinamen standing by who happened to know a few words of French told me that it was his sister's wedding. His face was as vacant and expressionless as if the occasion had been quite an ordinary one. I tried to congratulate him but as we could only understand each by using very few words I said : " Happiness—joy ! " He repeated " Happiness ! " but with the same expressionless face, but behind him the scarlet chair glowed in the sunshine. You never see faces light up in China, even at festivals : it is left to objects to proclaim joy in this country. The only occasions on which bright colours still break out are furnished by social life, and the only pageants of colour which smile out in the sunshine in China are the wedding and funeral processions.

This afternoon I revisited one of those periodical fairs which occupy the courts of an old temple and overflow them round about it. I first arrived at an avenue where the bird-market was held. There were quantities of birds for sale: greenfinches, chaffinches and tomtits, and some slender little grey birds with a small red or blue tuft on the breast.

They were all hopping daintily about on lacquer perches, tied to them by one foot, with their wings neatly bound together with thin string. Every now and then one of them would fall off the perch and hang dangling at the end of the string, until the absent-minded vendor observed its plight and put it back upon its perch.

There were also men carrying falcons and buzzards on their fists, for they used them for bringing down game here. Some of these were hooded and seemed to be quite tamed by their consternation at their blindness. Others with their heads free held themselves proudly erect, while their pitiless little eyes gleamed like jewels.

A mass of white and reddish feathers turned out to be a number of pigeons huddled in a cage. Close by, you could buy the whistles which these people hang on pigeons' necks for their flights. A little further off some brilliant parrots were making an uproar, which matched their plumage.

And the people of this ancient but childlike race were sauntering to and fro in crowds. Here is one, deeply serious in his futility, buying a little bird and bending to examine it with an expressionless face. Some, you see, are already walking away, cage in hand, with a cloth over the cage to save the little occupant from being scared. Here is a child who has just become possessed of a white mouse. An old man is carrying away a glass jar containing a fish he has just bought. He holds it with much circumspection, in both hands and as he recedes into the distance you can no longer see the jar of water

and the red fish looks as if it were suspended in the air between his hands.

There is an absolute hedge of beggars on each side of the stream of pedestrians. They are exposing their sores which strike the eye as sharply as flowers too brilliant for the withered branches they grow on. A horrible clamour from one corner roused my curiosity. I went to see what it meant. It was the hideous squealing of a number of sows with their legs tied together which some men had brought from a yard near-by and had flung down roughly on the ground. Some of the saunterers paused to gaze at them with dull curiosity. But if, at moments, one of the animals looked as if it might free itself every one jumped back in alarm, and no one dreamed of laughing at this absurd timidity even in that community where the sense of ridicule is so highly developed.

Their cowardice is easily explained. It is instinctive with people who are so utterly unaccustomed to take any kind of exercise that they have absolutely no confidence in their bodies and run away at the smallest alarm.

I went back to the fair. Some air-balloons were floating in a narrow alley, a cluster of rose-coloured spheres. There were large baskets at the entrance to the temple courtyards filled with those crimson bay-leaves in which all the power and wealth of autumn glory is concentrated. They are threaded on to strings forming chaplets or necklaces which one gives to children. I went through the gate and saw the usual array of fans, tobacco-boxes, copper objects, glassware commonplace or faked, and a little further on, a great display of velvet flowers. The combination of colour here is quite different to that we are accustomed to in the West. Here you notice a tendency, to use the palest tenderest shades in juxtaposition to some violent one, a very positive green or purple which probably borders a white zone. Nature seems to be of the same mind in China, and certain apples and pears have the smooth glossy tints and the mixture of vivid and weak colours that you see in wax fruits in Europe.

I now went on to the toy stalls, and found there the most surprisingly good imitations of nature; insects made of cloth, little storks palpitating at the end of a string, grasshoppers and butterflies whose real motions in life had been so exactly rendered by the simplest artifices that it seemed as if an observation as perspicacious as this must have arisen from malice or magic, not from any potency of art.

I admired some tortoises made of plaited grass with two little holes for eyes which were so exactly like the living animal that the maker of them must indeed have been a sorcerer. I looked round and beheld him: only a poor one-eyed fellow, squatting on the ground and laughing mechanically, as he raised his imbecile face to the purchasers. Perhaps after all he is no creator, but only copying the methods of another. And perhaps that other had learnt the trick from someone else. You are never sure of finding an original in the continuous succession of repetitions in Oriental arts and crafts.

The crowd streams listlessly between the stalls. Here are some plump little Chinese women admiring a precious stone which fascinates them like the eye of a serpent. Many of them are dragging along their children by the hand. One of them is carrying a baby crowned with a diadem of cloth and swaddled up in some black and yellow stuff which seems to imitate a tiger-skin. A little gong in the distance announces the opening of a theatre.

In some ways one is reminded of our own fairs of days gone by. Here is a man chanting out a nasal lamentation, pointing with his stick to some pictures which correspond to the couplets he is singing. One charlatan is selling powders; another, charms against poison, and to advertise his own immunity he lays scorpions and little snakes on his bare breast, and then sweeps them away in an absent-minded manner. Some people sitting at little tables are eating gluttonously, and in perfect silence. Bold and toothless old creatures who recall the grotesques of Leonardo da Vinci, persecute the foreigners with their

demands for alms, and contrive to make their very hideousness a method of constraining their victims to accede. A few Manchu ladies with lustrous black eyes and faces plastered with paint move gracefully through the crowd, quite eclipsing the blurred Chinese faces by their superior imperturbability.

The temple roofs stick up like horns over all these sheep-like faces, and beyond and above the temples your eye drinks in that celestial azure which is the Heaven of the eye, the chaste intoxication of a Northern sky.

I walked back to the hotel through streets into which the fair had overflowed, had continued itself and was dwindling to vanishing-point. I have already remarked on the tiny scale on which trading is often carried on in China. Quite a number of men were squatting before the houses in this street, with the little things they wished to sell spread out before them. It is difficult to imagine how very modest their little belongings were. A china spoon, a copper buckle, the lid of a tobacco-box and a pair of ancient spectacles were considered adequate merchandise to set out for sale, and the dried-up inscrutable vendor sitting behind these poor little objects put me in mind of an ant or a grasshopper offering what he has gathered up : a wisp of straw perhaps, or a grain of fine gravel or a dew-drop, or the petal of some little flower.

These trifles are so well displayed that quite often the eye is deceived, and the hand goes out to snatch one up for closer inspection, only to set it down again almost as rapidly. But however little you have disorganised the vendor's scheme of arrangement, he *never* leaves the object where you have put it down. I have tested this ten times over at least. After having examined one of these poor little things I have put it down again in exactly the same spot as far as I could see. Before I have gone two paces away from him the maniacal little vendor will have picked it up delicately ; then with as much care, respect and pleasure as if he were handling a jewel

he will have put down the tiny thing again on the only spot, at the only angle that will content him.

The evenings are long now and transparently pure. Rooks wheel in thick clouds round the towers of the Bell and the Drum. Looking at the sunset just now from my window I saw that the jagged line of the mountains fleeting along the sky was blue like perfect lapis. A palace in the Forbidden City was standing out like an enormous ox suddenly checked in its course, and threw out its horns darkly against the pale melting greenish-azure of the upper sky.

I went down into the wooded garden of the Legation where the less bushy trees were outlined against the sky by the clear pattern of their leaves. The moon had already cast her strange pallor like foam upon the ground, and a wholly unreal light charmed and astonished the eye. A blackbird flapped his wings in this changed atmosphere, where amongst the vaguely-seen objects of the hour he seemed to be breaking up the ordinary distances of daylight which had not yet been replaced by those of the sheer moonlight.

There is more than one living centre of Catholicism in Pekin. To-day I searched for traces of it in ruins. I went to visit that bit of the Summer Palace which was built by Jesuits for the Emperor Kien-Lung, which was burned down, as you know, by the Anglo-French troops as a reprisal for the tortures inflicted on the men who went to parley under a flag of truce. A few minutes in a motor-car brought us to the gate, which was immediately opened for us.[1] We first walked through a slight

[1] I made this expedition with M. Auguste Boppe, French Minister in China, whose guest I had then the honour to be; he has since died at his post. I could not let slip this opportunity of saluting his memory. He was a diplomat passionate in the service of France, a subtle and searching amateur of all the arts; his friends will never forget the charm and assured ease of his conversation, nor the exquisite sensibility which lay concealed under the exterior of a polished man of the world.

hollow which had been the basin of a lake. There were reeds and rushes growing round us, beyond these rose the indeterminate mass of the ruins and beyond that again, the bare mountains went tapering up into mystic bliss in the glory of the light.

I could have believed myself to be in the middle of the Roman Campagna. It was the same stretch of vast unpopulated emptiness and only a little more dried up. Instead of being dissipated as we went on, my illusion only became confirmed. I was delighted to see the firm elements of an architecture once more, even lying on the ground as fragments of stone, and to come suddenly upon the proud slender immortal column, a sister here, to the spirit of the Occident. There was one little building where each window was adorned with the moulding of a shell. The ground was strewn with broken vases and balustrades of white marble which looked of fairly recent date and had not the smallest appearance of antiquity. But there is still the base of an altar standing which is after the antique, and close by some tiny bridges leap lightly over the space they have to span, indeed it seems here as if classical and Chinese architecture were playing with one another.

Presently we came to the foot of a staircase in two flights which had once been bordered with fountains. It led up on to a terrace, where there is a square pavilion ornamented with baskets of Chinese enamel fruits in baroque style. We strolled along the fish-ponds and beside the elevator which was Father Benoit's great achievement.

When we had descended by another staircase and turned round we had a picture by Piranese before us. Some jujube-trees grow up against the sky on the top of the wall. Two cottages stand against the wall of the ruin under a big tree. Seated outside them some peasants were pulling maize off the stalks, some hens were clucking between their feet, a dog was growling, and at a

little distance, a black bull stared at us full of motionless anxiety. To complete the resemblance to Italy the long-drawn notes of a rustic singer were heard; the voice was not gutteral it is true, as it would have been anywhere on the Mediterranean coast, but nasal. And quite close, also in the picture, stood a last remaining pavilion of the Louis XV period, white carven and smiling in this glorious light which makes even ruins look joyous.

Nothing could give a better idea of the resolute and ingenious efforts of the Jesuits in China than the whole impression given by these monuments, which are the expression of a *pensum* coming from the heart, combining as they do a little touching gaucherie with a good deal of charm and a most sedulous industry. The Jesuits strain every nerve to bring these two great civilisations together by the application of their own high qualities to the task. Just as the Crusaders waged war on the Orient in the spirit of chivalry, so it is through them again that the West can rival the East in courtesy.

Bringing our arts and sciences to the Far East they reformed the calendar, built palaces, founded rules and invented machines in order that by their works their faith might be spread abroad. There was always a duel between themselves and the Emperor, a contest in subtlety and acuteness, the former spending themselves in order to establish their doctrines, the latter intent on getting every scrap of advantage out of them that he could extract without submitting for a moment to their ascendency.

And the same duel is in progress to-day between the foreigners who bring their services here and China which takes advantage of them. Anything that the missionaries obtained in the way of favour was only apparent, for they never accepted the slightest advantage personally. Nothing was real for them but insults, injuries, service and many miseries, but according to the smart discipline of the most aristocratic of the orders,

they concealed the secret austerity of their virtues under an appearance of almost worldly well-being.

For the rest, even at those times they seemed to be receiving the best treatment, the Emperors with the cleverness and astuteness of Asiatics in imperceptibly humiliating the Europeans who are serving them, understood only too well how to do this, and vexations cropped out in manifold forms. This was especially to be observed in the reign of Kien-lung. Brother Attiret, who came of a family of painters and was a painter himself with a passion for his art, had presented the Emperor with a few pictures which had pleased him fairly well. But the sovereign gave him to understand that if his pictures were to be really appreciated he must abandon the bad principles of the school to which he had been attached and study under Chinese painters. Thus by an effort which was more cruel to him than renunciation of his art would have been, the Brother was obliged to practise it in defiance of his real taste, his doctrines and his ideal. He submitted however to the obligation to paint in the Chinese manner.

Journeys are delightful in themselves, but the start never is. For that is the inevitable moment when one must break off a thousand little friendships with places and things, which are never so dear as when we have to leave them. Nothing seems so important then as the choice of the place where we take a last look at all we are obliged to leave, the place where we say good-bye to it all.

I imagined myself suspended in the air over all the best points of view in Pekin. To which should I consecrate my last visit ? Should I gaze once more on the grave exactitude of the Imperial City, or should I return to admire the cold purity of the Temple of Heaven ? Should I revisit the stunted gardens of the Summer Palace. I made a better choice than any of these.

I went back to the little Buddhist Temple of the Garden of the Law perhaps because it is the only place in Pekin which has the charm of gentleness.

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when we came upon it in its maze of streets. It was peacefully wide open as usual, and filled with tranquil shade. The first *bonze* that we met in the court recognised us in spite of the dim light. He went to fetch his companions who made the excuses of the priests of higher rank, all detained at a ceremony. As they were leading us in I left them for a minute to go into a hall where I heard the silvery note of a gong resounding. A little service was just over. Only one lamp was burning and as the flame leapt up and down I caught flashes and glimpses, instantly obscured and then instantly renewed, of the golden-bronze Buddha's ineffable smile. There was still one priest before the altar: with his head bowed over the feet of the giant statue he was chanting almost under his breath in a voice which was mechanical perhaps, and which yet profoundly moved me.

All prayer is charged with more sorrow than it knows: it is always a human lamentation. As he finished he looked up, and saw me and smiled. Then we went together to the room where the other *bonzes* were entertaining my friends: they had already brought in tea, pumpkin seeds and frugal little burnt almonds which had a taste of dried blossom.

Suddenly one of them slipped away and reappearing soon afterwards he presented me with three of the sandalwood desks which I had admired on my former visit. He looked quite delighted as he made this offering. They had had the desks made expressly for me. Whilst one of my companions thanked the monks for me, I noticed the rather sheep-like gentleness of their thin faces in the lamplight. I wished that I could have talked to them myself. When I went away I tried to make them accept some money but it was useless to insist, and my friend said everything that he decently could on the subject;

they absolutely refused to accept anything, defending themselves with the laughter and pretty evasions of children. They were innocent souls, and perhaps quite insignificant as men, and yet, a sublime doctrine shone within them. I was thinking about them as I came back and thus it was that I wrote the few following lines, which are all that my ignorance permits of in the style of the ancient Chinese poems :

The traveller must set forth again. Already his desires are at war with his regret.

The bonzes stand up to make their last salute. He will never see them again. Outside, the tall sophora-tree entangles the moon in her branches.

Although their rule does not command it, although it is permitted to mistrust the men of the west, the bonzes have made them welcome.

He does not know their language, he is not of their race, he is not of their faith, and yet they are friends.

The flowering gardens and dark forests of these worlds, so far apart, will never meet. But the spices of each are blown forth to each, and meet and mingle on the bosom of the sea

The Great Wall. The Tombs of the Mings

To-day I got a glimpse of the Great Wall under a grey sky with a sharp wind blowing. I was walking between the battlements on the wide low rampart which is surmounted at intervals with small half-ruined forts. Some camels led by a herdsman were advancing up the slope with their silly pompous gait, winding their sinuous necks about with the elegance of a swan. The pollen of flowers was blown this way and that and a tall campanula shivered between two stones. Little grasshoppers

opened their red wings, and their equipment which looks so much like silk and steel recalled the ancient Chinese accoutrements so successfully that it would have been easy enough for me to imagine them as souls of Mandarin warriors still lingering in the ancient guard-posts.

Stretching before me into the far distance were the plains from which the hordes of the Barbarians rushed upon the Empire. But as far as eye could reach, the wall raised up its forbidding height, and I could see it reappear on the slope of the highest mountain. We must realise that though ruinous in parts and much dilapidated to-day it still continues its long march of many hundreds of miles, leaping ravines and peaks in a disdainful manner, mounting up slopes like a procession, losing itself among sands like a river until at last it halts and stumbles, and upon the last heap of rubbish one poor flower triumphs over all this fallen pride while the harsh wind of the desert whistles by.

The eye takes in the whole impression of that spot very rapidly and yet how difficult it is to turn away. There are so many poor phantoms to hold you back.

I returned by the descent among the rocks. I do not know what insect it was that I heard leaping up with a noise like a spring that you let go, and then it immediately gave forth its deep sonorous note. I picked up one of the strange grasshoppers of the district. Its flat sharp body seemed to me to be made of two blades of grass stuck together and suddenly it poked up a little rebellious head where two glittering tiny drops did duty for eyes.

Here I am back again in the dreary dining-room of the hotel from which I shall start to-morrow on an expedition to the tomb of the Mings. One of those limp soldiers that one sees trailing themselves about everywhere here is lying asleep sprawling all over a sofa. Near him some Chinese are playing a game of dominoes something like ours.

I began to think about the Wall again. The habit of defending one's country by huge walls was common to all the peoples of Antiquity, but no other race ever made such a colossal effort to ensure permanence and to shut out the invader as the Chinese. What myriads of toilers have spent themselves upon the construction and upkeep of this enormous undertaking. Men of the frontiers did not suffice for it and thousands of workmen were recruited from the interior. They performed forced labour, digging up the foundations and laying bricks. In cases of alarm they lit signal-fires which were repeated nearer and nearer Pekin until the capital realised the danger. They were obliged to drink water so freezingly cold that it made their bones ache. Behind them was the Empire, and also the goodly towns and the homes they were forced to leave and before them was the strange wide space of the desert which turns the brain dizzy with apprehension, a desert emptier and more bitter than the ocean.

Sometimes one of the soldiers would be seized with despair. He would rush up to his captain and plead to be sent on leave. The officer would simply order him to return to his working-party without more ado. And reluctantly he would rejoin his companions who were singing over their work on the Wall.

Sometimes the troops made *sotries* in pursuit of the absolutely elusive enemy or waged war in that inhuman region where those who fell served as food for the kites, who carried their entrails up into the branches. And yet in their homes, their wives waited . . . and waited . . . and hoped. There is a Chinese poem which expresses their lamentation.

They had sworn an oath that they would utterly destroy the Hiong-nou without thought for their own lives.

Five thousand warriors were they, five thousand warriors in sheep-skin coats.

Oh woe! Alas! The bones that lie scattered on the banks

of the Wou-Fing are still men in the hearts, in the dreams, of their women.

These verses date from the tenth century A.D. But there were similar lamentations twelve hundred years before. An admirable little poem written in the time of Han describes the hard lot of the soldier :

He went forth to the wars at fifteen years old and not for nine years could he return.

Of the people he met on the road he asked news of his loved ones.

But nothing did they say and only pointed to the tombs among the sighing cypress-trees.

He came to his home and lo ! a hare ran forth from the hole for the dogs. A pheasant flew up from the roof.

Wild corn had grown up in the court-yard and mallows upon the well.

He gathered the herbs to make soup and set on the corn to boil, but when the meal was ready there was none to share it with him. He left it and went forth weeping, to gaze on the tombs.

High over the multitudes who lay crushed under the weight of his will the Emperor sat enthroned. He was called the Master of Men and also with an even stranger poetry one of them described himself in an inscription as the Solitary. Not one of them was greater or more terrible than the principal promoter of the building of the Wall, the famous Emperor Tsin Che-Hoang Ti.

He reigned in the third century B.C. and he was an implacable dispenser of law and order. He wished to cast the whole of China in one mould ; to destroy the feudal aristocracy, replacing it everywhere, not by his own retainers but by stewards and administrators. He surrounded himself with judges and lawyers and reserved

all his favour for them. And yet they were kept strictly to their duty. If it was not performed they were sent to work on the Wall. As he was invested with the mandate of Heaven he believed that nature itself came within his jurisdiction. He punished a volcano which had dared to erupt inconveniently. As he had supplanted the Tcheou dynasty which reigned by virtue of Fire, he imagined that according to the succession of the five elements he himself reigned by virtue of Water: he adopted its colour and also shrouded all the Imperial trappings of pomp in black.

He had innumerable palaces, for he reconstructed in the capital all the baronial residences which he had rased to the ground in the provinces, and every one of them, crammed with treasure, with women and with musicians were permanently at his disposal. But though these palaces offered him nights of pleasure, he devoted his nights to books, and the very hardest brain-work. He worked unremittingly, passing every State Paper under his personal examination.

The memory of him is held in abomination by the men of letters for he wanted to break their power in China. Once when one of these scholars was raving on as usual about the necessity of conforming absolutely to the past, one of the Emperor's councillors, sure of having his master's support, answered sharply that the times were changing, that it was necessary to keep abreast of the times, or to drop out altogether, and in order to crush this overweening power of the past he dared to demand the destruction of the old texts which were the instrument of that power.

The Emperor issued an edict that this should be done. It is a famous period of Chinese history, and the scholars having since resumed their paramount position have covered the memory of the Emperor Tsin with opprobrium.

According to all reports he was a bastard and certain characteristics seem to point to an admixture of foreign

blood. He is said to have possessed a prominent nose, wide-open eyes, and to make a positive ogre of him, tradition also credits him with the breast of a bird of prey, the voice of a jackal and the heart of a tiger or a wolf.

He raised stelæ on the sacred mountains. And there, like kings of Assyria and Egypt, but without delirious inflation, he bears solemn and sober testimony to his own qualities :

His might absorbed the might of the greatest lords . . .
He never dared to be idle, nor at ease . . .
He conceived and brought into being, definite law and order.

And yet he had a madness and that the greatest of all ; he hoped to avoid death indefinitely. In the miserable scope of human mediocrity to which we are now reduced in the full blast of modernity, it is hardly possible to conceive of the gigantic audacity of the ambitions and hopes of such colossal figures as the Emperor Tsin. Arrived at the zenith of all human power, nothing was left to be desired except immortality. It was the last step, the supreme promotion, to separate from the human herd beyond all doubt ; to cross the threshold of the Gods.

While the whole prostrated Empire kept silence round the supreme power only the insidious murmur of the magicians reached his ear. They whispered to him of the Three Isles where all the animals are white, where the palaces are made of gold and silver and where the herb of immortality is to be found. The Isles, they said, were not far distant, but strange winds rose up always to beat back ships from their shores. The Emperor Tsin actually deliberated as to whether he should go himself on this voyage of discovery but feeling unable to commit himself to so many hazards he sent the magicians in his stead.

One of them departed with much treasure, with workmen, and with three thousand youths and the same number of maidens and having no doubt settled in Japan was never seen again in China. The others returned and

related that they had seen the Isles but that a great sea-serpent had prevented them from landing. Perhaps the Emperor knew quite well that they were lying but he was too much set upon his dream of immortality not to make further attempts. When on his last progress through China he stood upon the heights of a promontory and gazed long over the fabulous sea. Then he went north again, along the shore, keeping his big crossbow always beside him. With this bow you could shoot off several arrows at once. Having seen a huge fish in the water he shot at it and killed it and then made up his mind that this must be the sea-serpent which had prevented the magicians from landing on the Isles.

But even as he indulged himself in his dreams of immortality death had him fast by the hand. He fell ill. No one dared to offend him by any allusion to his weakness and entirely without aid he had to descend alone from the heights of his superhuman ambition and admit that he was dying.

He sent a letter to his eldest son. "You are to go to Hien-yang with my funeral procession," he wrote, "and to bury me there." He died shortly afterwards but his councillors, fearing disturbances, were unwilling to make it known. His convoy continued to go forth in the same state for several days with the chief eunuch on the Imperial chariot as usual, and repasts were brought to it as the habit was. At last, however, it was absolutely necessary to announce the death and all the usual ceremonies were performed. The Emperor was interred with his treasure, and his wives were slain.

Underground in his tomb they set an image of Heaven and of the Empire with soil made of silver and rivers of mercury. Torches which would burn a very long time were lighted in this underground world. Crossbows were strung and placed in the corridors. The workmen who constructed the last gallery were walled up there so that no one should yield up the secret of this subterranean city. The earth which covered it was planted

with trees and the Emperor Tsin rested there engulfed in almost solid silence and in time that has no hours, until the first robber was bold enough to glide into the tomb.

This morning I went to see the tombs of the Mings riding a donkey with a hard brisk trot.

A young Chinaman carried my lunch behind me in a basket which he opened every now and then, to peep at my provisions. The weather was dull and grey and very soon a fine rain came down in sheets blotting out the landscape. We rode through fields of maize, millet and sesame. Misty mountains rose up all around us. From time to time we passed through clusters of silent houses, villages which seemed to be asleep.

It is extraordinary how the slightest rain puts a stop to all activity in China, and it recalls those fairy-tales in which some of the characters die of a prick.

At last I saw that we were coming to a vast portico of stone with five bays. A red gate in front of it opens into the paved road which leads on until you arrive at the tombs. It leads first to a square pavilion which is also red, and is surrounded by four white pillars with dragons coiled round them. This pavilion contains a great stone tortoise, bearing a stele. I went forward and a little further on it seemed to me that I was expected. A whole menagerie in stone was ranged on each side of the road, on the road-level: lions, unicorns, camels, horses, elephants, a pair of each, one standing and one bent forward on its knees. To tell the truth they are examples of the inept sculpture of the Ming period, bulky without being powerful, gross without being savage.

But the whole spectacle is decidedly imposing. The double rank is continued by stone figures of Mandarins, some clumsy in their stone cuirasses, others walled-up in their long stone robes. The scanty grass shivers around them.

The road bends now, and passes beneath another

portico, crosses two bridges, and at this point I saw the funereal monuments in the distance veiled in the grey atmosphere where everything fades from sight. There they stand, all thirteen of them, in a vast circle at the foot of the mountains in the undeniably splendid position chosen for them by the geomancers.

As I came gradually nearer, the tombs nearest to me gradually revealed the red walls that surround them and the high pavilions backed by trees. The first thing to notice is the discreet elegance of their proportions. There is nothing outrageous, nothing emphatic and nothing exclusively funereal about them. They seem like pleasant country retreats. I visited several of them. They are all built on the same plan but that of the Emperor Yung-Lo is rather larger than the rest. A gate was opened for me and I found myself in a charming wild garden, refreshed by the rain.

The soaked red wall looked smooth like a piece of stuff behind the freshened green of the rain-washed plants.

There is a very simple building at the end of this first court. In the second stands a more important building raised on three terraces of white marble and roofed with yellow tiles which are covered with plants and creepers, which seem to be growing on the slope of a golden hill. This roof covers only one chamber, which has great columns, each one of them the trunk of a tree. A carved wooden dais on the bare altar still bears the tablet of the dead Emperor.

While I was there I heard the sharp dry tapping of little hoofs on the pavement and an ass went quietly by with her foal.

Then I came to the innermost court. Beyond the trees and grass a semicircle of rude stones crenellated like battlements stood out from the mountain-side where the red wall comes shoulder to shoulder with it. A high pavilion rises up on the terrace which is supported by the mountain-side and is reached by means of two lateral ramps. Under the pavilion roof is an enormous

rose-coloured stele which bears the posthumous title of the Emperor, in imposing characters. That inscription suffices. Pride is so lofty here that it does not need the support of eulogy and really scorns to boast. Boasting would mean that the order of the Empire was not perfect ; that it had been necessary to remedy some defect. The dust of these Emperors admits to nothing but to the fact that the Emperors reigned.

A vast tunnel into the rock under the pavilion brings you to a last barrier in the darkness of the bowels of the mountain. There is no inscription here. Smooth, dark and dumb the wall of rock commands the living man to forbear. He can go no further. Only the Emperor could go further and following the dark road of his fate the very mountain fell upon him as a veil. Never has the word *buried* had more significance. Here the dead man does not spring into space, he does not strive deliriously to reach the plane of gods. He does not depart. He returns. *He goes in.*

Not that he is enclosed in a narrow tomb which isolates the body while the living can walk round it. The construction of the tombs proclaims the burial but makes no detention. After the entrance chambers the great wall arms and fortifies itself suddenly to hold the supreme threshold against all intruders and to cover the Emperor's retreat. It all ends in a mountain-side which has nothing to say, and in the wind which shivers amongst the oak-leaves just as it does elsewhere.

BOOK II

IN THE COUNTRY

THE BOLSHEVISTS

At the end of September when I returned to Pekin for a few days there were only two topics of conversation: one was the suppression of the Russian Legation. The Russian Minister had so far succeeded in holding his position, always hoping that a national government would be re-established in his country and would then find the rights of Russia safeguarded in China. But the more illusory this hope became, the more difficult he found it to keep his post; he yielded finally to adverse fortune.

Fifty-two consulates fell with the Legation and this effacement of the nation which had hitherto been the most powerful of all the European nations in China, was bound to make a deep impression. However, just at that moment Russia emerged again in another fashion. Bolshevist emissaries arrived at Pekin. Officially they are envoys to the Far Eastern Republic, but these people were the creation and the creatures of the Soviet. They stayed at the French hotel where the other guests watched them at their meals in rather comic alarm. You would have thought the onlookers were little lambs, quite surprised to see the wolves gobbling up a meal, without including them in the menu.

One of the envoys, who had an enormous fair beard and a fleshy bald forehead was a retired officer who had become a Bolshevist strictly as a means of livelihood. All the others gave the impression that their clothes were too new, and looking at once supercilious and uneasy, might have been taken for workmen in their Sunday suits who would soon be in very bad tempers.

Their presence brings up, or rather defines, the great

question: "Will Bolshevism ever spread in China?" Those who always deal in the small change of received ideas will answer that there are too many small holders and cultivators here to admit of the possibility of Communism succeeding. But people who observe for themselves are less decisive. They know what the peasants have to endure and fear, that they will become desperate at last and ready to deliver themselves up to any party which promises them a better fate. Then, too, the soldiers who are badly paid and badly disciplined, feel quite as much discontent as they give rise to, and would easily be swept into any revolutionary movement. Thus we get the formation of immense masses of people who are no longer attached to any solid principle. They are like badly-stowed cargoes which begin to batter against the sides of the ship at the first motion of the storm.

And the Bolshevists are sparing no efforts. Their emissaries are well supplied with money and are working hard at their cause in every large town. In proportion as it appears that Bolshevism has failed as a Communist revolution, it will derive strength from its Asiatic character. After announcing with a great flourish the establishment of a new era upon earth it merely ended in reviving all that is most primitive in man. Disappointed of the godlike shapes that they thought they saw in the clouds the Bolshevists turned to the bowels of the earth to find more reliable deities.

They are making the greatest efforts to awaken the ancient souls of Asia. They have invaded Persia, they are upholding the Turks of Angora and are threatening Japan. They took part in the last revolt in Korea. They are agitating for revolution in India. In China they are encouraging the Government to dispute with other countries the privileges which the foreigners still enjoy and they have thrown up all claim to the rights of old Russia. There are plenty of Chinamen with just enough astuteness mixed with improvidence to rejoice at this conjunction and the opportunity which it gives them

to hamper and embarrass the powers, all the more easily because the Europeans have no policy, and no unity among themselves.

The second topic of conversation is the likelihood of famine. The rains having failed this year the harvests are a complete failure and tens of millions of men, women and children see starvation staring them in the face. Nevertheless, left to itself, it is doubtful whether the Government at Pekin would take any measures to avert the catastrophe. Not only by reason of its instability and its pitiful embarrassments, but also because under the threat of such scourges everything from his natural laziness to the profundity of his thoughts counsels the Chinaman to take no action. The Chinese are fully alive to the perpetual drama of the national struggle to find enough food for a population excessive for its area. And as they are far from giving the individual the importance that he has in our eyes, they look upon these huge calamities, as Nature's means of restoring a happy medium. They believe that by flying in the face of Nature on an occasion like this, they run the risk of provoking worse misfortunes. And it is by no means certain that the nervous sensibility of the Occident does not provoke worse evils in the distance by staving off those which are immediate.

And yet a dull fear is certainly growing apace among the people here. Even in August as I was travelling through the bare mountain country of the Shansi I saw the peasants gathering leaves for food, leaves from the only trees in the district, those planted along the railway by the French company which constructed it. Since then the misery has done nothing but increase. The number of brigands has increased too. People are telling wild tales of having seen little dragons in the ponds, which will devour men when they grow to their full size.

The peasants are flocking into the towns and when they have sold their cattle, they attempt to sell their children. Quite lately I was visiting the house of a Frenchman

where a certain stir among the Chinese domestics pointed to some reason for rejoicing. I was told all about it. One of the women servants who was married but had never had any children had just crowned her wishes by buying a little boy. To tell the truth she had been bargaining for several days, but the peasant-father asked ten dollars for his son and the woman was determined to beat him down to seven. She had stuck to her point, the father had been obliged to give in and the adopting family were rejoicing in consequence.

The French missionaries of Tchili must be given the first place among those who gave the alarm of the famine. One of them who had come to make his annual retreat in Pekin offered to put me up at his house when he went home and to show me round his district.

That is how I came to be at Tien-Tsin this morning with another Father who is going to be my companion on the journey. He is a Lazarist, like my host. He is a young man who came back to China after having taken part in the War and he is to be the first occupant of a new mission. We both travelled in rickshaws which were also laden with luggage. We started at six o'clock in the morning. The weather was overcast, and grey. We passed through the European quarter finding it deserted but when we entered the Chinese city it was swarming both with rickshaws and pedestrians. The rickshaw men were trotting as usual, pressing forward, but their active bodies carry lugubrious countenances.

The Chinamen's bare feet made a slapping sound in the mud ; the vendors of eatables displayed rolls, fritters and smoking hot water-lily roots. The shops reopened as we went along and I had a glimpse as we passed of a strange gathering of hooded birds of prey, perched in circles on large baskets in a bird-shop. We came to ass-back bridges from which we looked down on a yellow river practically paved with river craft. We embarked on the little steamer we were bound for ; it also tugs a pontoon, which to-day was crammed with people.

Junks glided by, the antennæ of the see-saw wells never ceased to oscillate on the banks and only the heaps of vegetables stacked on the barges brought some notes of vivid freshness into this colourless confusion.

I saw a wretched old woman in a boat pulling at the oars with her mutilated feet against the timbers, her slits of eyes as brilliant as those of a monkey. Three babies were lying in the bottom of the boat rolled up in the same ragged covering. Their faces did not look as if they had ever been touched with water, but the youngest had his hair dressed in the elaborate plaits and tufts which are customary for Chinese babies.

The steamer started up the river. Some weakly-looking Chinese were reading and eating in the only cabin. It seemed to rouse their curiosity to see me writing. The river continued to be of a yellowish-grey colour, which may be described as ochre. We met junks gliding down-river loaded with passengers, lying down for the most part looking torpid and dazed like invalids. "They are fugitives from the famine," said the captain of our boat. Sometimes a corpse came drifting past with the arms and legs spread wide apart and all swollen with water. Other junks came up the river towed by men whose costume became briefer and briefer, slighter and slighter as they advanced into the interior, until at last they were quite naked.

The country is quite flat on each side of the river and sometimes you see a flock of those fat-tailed sheep which Marco Polo describes. I saw some peasants drawing along an implement which looks like a plough but it is really a sowing-drill, as they do not scatter the grain to the winds here. Now and then our steamboat slowed down to allow some passengers to spring into a boat, while others hailed two men selling fritters and cakes, which they can always dispose of, and it seems very singular to me to be travelling up to a famine area among these people who are really always eating.

Several times we passed a stationary junk armed

with a small machine-gun. These constitute the river police. At sunset all the small craft near it gather round the gunboat for the night. There is no navigation at night for fear of brigands. But these brigands are for the most part only poor devils who owe all their daring to desperation.

Towards evening we came upon a humble village, whose low houses were like a group of tortoises huddled near the water. It was there that we were to spend the night and we could already see a missionary waving to us from the bank. My companion and I disembarked and the Father who was waiting for us, led us to his house through streets which were quietly filthy in the patriarchal manner. It is only a poor dwelling consisting of a few rooms which are just the width of the courtyard; one large room which serves as a church and a little shed at the back which is the school-room. But there is a harmonium in one of the rooms. My companion, who is mad on music, simply rushed to it, and then the poor broken-winded instrument began to moan.

An outside staircase leads up to the roof. I went up and from there I got a view of the whole plain, of the few trees which exist on it and the huge shining rose-coloured sun sinking behind the long damp horizon. Peasants were coming quietly back to the village from the fields. They came noiselessly. I did not hear shouts, nor any murmur of voices. I went down from the roof and soon afterwards we dined. It was my first experience of a missionary's simple, cordial hospitality, when he strains every nerve to make the stranger welcome, searching his cupboards for some poor little dainty which has been treasured up there for a long time; a box of preserved fruit perhaps, or sometimes even a bottle of Bordeaux, at least, that is what it is called, and you must not forget it, when you are drinking so that imagination may make up for any deficiency in the flavour, and the expected sensation of enjoyment.

After dinner my travelling companion went straight to

bed, so that I was left alone with my host. Greek by nationality, he is French by culture and education. Quite lately he was so very ill that Extreme Unction was administered, and one may easily imagine the sort of nursing and doctoring that a European can obtain in the interior of China. He assured me, however, that he had quite recovered and seemed full of enthusiasm and good spirits. We spoke of Europe, for conversation in the Far East always deals with one world or the other. The Father sometimes dreams a little of Constantinople where he was born and that he would like to revisit before he dies, but his memories of that marvellous city do not prevent him from preferring these wretched plains at the back of beyond, to everything else in the world because it is here that his mission in life must be accomplished.

While we were talking some Chinese came in; they were Christians from the village. They came in as if they were quite at home there and stood round in a semi-circle. A few of the children had a wide-awake look which they will lose later on in a country where the animation of the youthful faces scatters a few sparks of fire among the lifeless extinguished faces of the adults. The men talked to my host in that raucous voice, to which you do not become accustomed for some time. It seems to attack phrases very brusquely.

One youth among the party wore a pair of baggy blue corduroy trousers, which in no way resembles the ordinary Chinese costume. It was not difficult for me to discover the origin of them.

"This young man went to France and 'joined up' for the War, didn't he?" I asked the Father.

I was right. I looked at him more closely: he had a rather winning face, and that hard cold charm which young Chinamen sometimes display. It seemed that he knew a little French, but we had great difficulty in making him speak it. After much questioning and encouragement he decided at last to utter a few French words which we interpreted as best we could. He told us first

that he had been at Bayonne with the English. The name Bayonne astonished us, but we let it pass, for where do you not find the English? But our perplexity returned when he mentioned Pampelune. Pampelune was meant to confirm Bayonne and yet we could not imagine that he had made any such excursion. We sought another explanation. Bayonne then became Bailleul, and then we remembered the way in which the Chinese always substitute 'l' for 'r,' which they do not seem able to pronounce, and straightway Pampelune became Poperinghe.

Then the young man laughed.

"In France," he said, "there are many . . . . There followed a word which it was impossible to interpret.

The Father thought he understood it as— "seminaries," but he was candid enough to recognise that this interpretation, which pleased him, was hardly a likely one. "Many seminaries?" he repeated doubtfully, looking at me. Alas! I remembered only too well the name that is given to all the little wine-shops in Flanders! "A great many *estaminets*," I said. It was the right word at last. The Chinaman laughed again and told us not without pride that he had drunk white wine in Flanders. He did not seem to realise all the blood that had been shed in order that the opportunity should come to him to drink that wine. But there were other things that he remembered. It seems that several women sought his company in a manner somewhat shocking to the Oriental sense of modesty; and here we have only one more example of something which was only too general. It was the behaviour of white women which caused the black and yellow men who came to Europe for the war to lose their respect for the white races.

I passed the night on a Chinese bed, which is nothing but a plank with a blanket to fold over yourself. We were up at dawn. First I heard Mass in the little church which was still practically dark. Some peasants were grouped at the far end of it, whom I only perceived as the growing light revealed its decent poverty-stricken look. The peasants had come to hear Mass before starting to their day's work, some of them were the most wretched specimens of Chinese women to whom Catholicism had given a certain dignity. Outside, the village was coming to life for the day, almost without noise.

We took our departure in a small boat which was to convey us to the Mission Headquarters, where the Father I had met in Pekin was expecting me. Sometimes the old boatman would make a remark and then laugh; the yellow current of the river smacked merrily against the bows, and we added our own conversation to its perpetual murmur.

I was questioning the Father on various subjects. I asked him first what he thought of the peasants. How often, how very often, I have put these questions as to the soul of the Chinese, to Europeans who live here. I never listen to their answer without falling into a sort of dream. It seems to me that I am listening to the report of a scout, of an exhausted runner, who has been checked at the edge of an immense enclosure, who talks confusedly of moats and of ramparts, of towers and defences, and sometimes of a concealed gate which he has discovered, and by which he believes one can gain entrance to the city, which defies all attack.

The missionaries are distinguished from all the other foreign residents in China by the fact that they have a good deal of commendation of the Chinese to advance to you. It is instinctive caution in the first place, no doubt, which makes them talk like this, but having taken far more trouble to know the Chinese and to dwell on their good points than any other foreigners,

it is also highly probable that they have discovered good in them which remains hidden from other Europeans. No one who saw anything of the peasants could fail to respect them. Sober, industrious and of much endurance, they put stiffening and fresh blood into the degenerate town-dwellers. I did not question the existence of these virtues of theirs, I only wanted to find out, if possible, to what lengths they would extend. Was it true I asked, that they are intensely vindictive, incapable of forgiving the smallest injury? It was in vain that I put this question. I got nothing but a vague and troubled answer followed by an instant return to their good points. "They are such good-hearted, honest fellows," the Father kept repeating. He even praised their courage to me. When trouble breaks out and the Christians are pressed to deny their faith, they will nearly all die for it, with the utmost fortitude.

If I insist on the poverty of emotion, and especially the lack of compassion in the race the Father will have none of it. He assures me that the peasants love their wives and children to the point of being inconsolable if they lose them. And he impressed on me that one must never forget that rites forbid them to show what they feel when they suffer. They are commanded to smile even when they have to announce the death of some loved one, and what heroism may not be concealed in that poor grimace, which, to tell the truth, is more like a dry, convulsive laugh, which foreigners naturally misunderstand.

The Father admitted, however, that Chinamen seem to have little trouble with their consciences, and that their confessions are mainly concerned with their worldly interests. But is their anything surprising in that? Are not peasants the same all the world over? Is not the rustic spirit always to be distinguished by its combined harshness and tenacity? A certain missionary made a collection of the proverbs of North China. I will quote one or two.

"When you are ill you think about getting well; when you are well you think about putting by your money." "One mandarin is worth three old men." "You must be serious in youth if you want to be happy in old age." "When you have tilled a field three years running you love it as much as your mother." "Money and children are both wealth, but the first is dead and the second living." "When you make an acquaintance you know his face but you don't know his heart." "When men live with everything in common they come to hatred, but animals love each other the better for it." "There are three things in the world that will never create a scandal: when a mandarin beats his people; when a father beats his children; when a husband beats his wife." "If one were never taken in, one would never grow wise."

And finally the proverb which Schopenhauer made famous, which crops up all over Asia :

"Women have plenty of hair but very few brains."

The proverbs cannot be said to be the expression of a generous expansiveness. They contain suspicion, tenacity, courage and bitterness. And do not these qualities constitute the common basis of human experience ?

We do not come across any poetic proverb. The proverbs of these people contain their wisdom. The poetry of China is to be found in its songs. But China is too old to sing any more. The life of China is dumb. Their proverbs have all the more weight because they are looked upon as indisputable authorities in debate, and anyone who has quoted a proverb which is to the point, is considered to have almost gained his point.

In the case of play upon words, you always find that the same phrases are used and laughed at : a new one one would not be appreciated or even noticed. At the same time one must not exaggerate the importance of proverbs here ; it is characteristics of peasants all over the world to believe in their generalised sagacity rather than to lend a willing ear to personal arguments which

they always suspect of being forged as traps for themselves. And do not let us forget that in our own small worlds the same threadbare jokes serve over and over again, until you would think that their substance would be worn away, but it never is. It is only the choicer minds which prefer a new invention, to something they have known ever since they could string two ideas together. Most men live and flourish upon repetition. The most one can say is that this tendency is more marked in China than elsewhere.

We went out to take air and exercise on the embankment which separates the river from the flat country which is often inundated. The weather was warm and fine, and a flight of birds circled in the filmy sky. The path we were following is encumbered with coffins, for it is the amiable custom of the peasants hereabouts, when one old parent dies, to leave the coffin lying there, until the death of the other parent, so that the same funeral ceremony will do for both.

My companion fell to telling me some of the tales which his peasants relate. Father Wieger has made a collection of a good many of them. When they are not stories of evil spirits, ghosts, and vampires, money plays the principal part in them. The marvellous element in the folk-lore here is always earth-bound and never escapes into poetry. You find a marked leaning to belief in predestination, a lively feeling for distributive justice, and a spirit of acutely malicious observation, which is generally associated with practical and cautious natures. Even if the characters do have a good impulse it is rare for them not to end by yielding to cupidity or fear. Take this story for instance:

"Once upon a time a poor man was ploughing a field, when at the end of a furrow the ploughshare struck against an object which broke it. (You must realise that in China ploughshares are still made of wood). It was a large earthenware saucepan. In order to compensate himself a little for the breakage the peasant

picked it up and took it home. He told his wife about the accident, and she broke out into reproaches as if it had been his fault. Taking no notice, he got ready to go to market. Having thrown a purse of money into the earthen pot as he passed it, he found another there as soon as he lifted it out. It was now obvious that he had lighted on one of those fairy gifts which supply an endless succession of any object which is dropped into them. Almost terrified by his good fortune he enjoined his wife not to breathe a word of it to anyone. She promised, but *could* not hold her tongue. The story spread, and finally reached the ears of a neighbouring proprietor, who then maintained that the pot had been found upon his land, and he opened a lawsuit with his neighbour. The mandarin called the advocates before him, heard the case, and then dismissed the Court, himself confiscating the object of dispute. The disputants went away cursing, and the father of the magistrate, who happened to be coming into the town, met them and overheard their bitter complaints. When he reached his son's house he reproached him for risking his judicial reputation for a saucepan. "But it is not an ordinary crock," said the mandarin. And leading his father up to the miraculous object he explained its peculiar properties. It is needless to say that the old man had no sooner understood the explanation than he leaned over the saucepan throwing money into it and pulling it out by handfuls. He leaned into it so far that he fell inside himself. His son immediately pulled him out. But, there was another old man kicking his legs in the pot in place of the first. The mandarin pulled him out also. And there was a third in the pot! Let us now imagine the anguish and mental confusion of the unjust mandarin on seeing himself surrounded and overwhelmed by all those identical fathers in a land where filial piety imposes so many inescapable duties; while, there was another father kicking away, head downwards in the pot, whom he could not leave there without

being guilty of a crime, and yet he could not pull him out without continuing the process indefinitely. . . ."

The missionary laughed at his story, which is typically Chinese in detail, but traces of the main substance of it might be found in many lands, for old wives' tales belong to the whole of humanity.

We went up the river again in our boat, the course of the stream has been rectified for a good long distance When we reached the end of this canal we could see two arrowy little spires, simple, artless constructions, like the design of a child. It was the Mission Headquarters where I was going to stay with the priest I had met in Pekin.

At the same moment a blast of trumpets rang out from the soldiers of the police force, who were sounding a salute, an amiable attention to the guests of the Father. They embarked in a boat of their own and preceded us for the rest of the way, sounding the trumpets all the time. When we arrived at the church they disembarked first and formed a guard of honour in double file for us to pass through when we landed on the bank. The Mission pupils continued the lines and as the Father came forward smiling to greet me, a Chinese priest was photographing us.

As this is the headquarters of a district, the Mission buildings are larger and more important here, and a tangle of bright flowers blazes in the courts between the white walls. There is a crucifix hanging on the wall of the refectory. A few portraits are hung beneath it, the three marshals, M. Poincaré, M. Clémenceau, Lord Kitchener and Admiral Lacaze. The conversation ran upon the difficulties of the apostolate, the different systems which could be applied, and on the good qualities of the peasants, and as I sat listening I could hardly believe that there had been several victims among the missionaries of this province in the riots of 1900. Those who settled here fifty years ago had to carry on in secret. Forty thousand Chinese have been converted since that

time, and this district had been newly created to allow for the expansion. But the very success of the apostolate raises a problem ; in proportion as the catch becomes heavier so the strain on the net is greater, and it threatens to break. There are now not enough missionaries for the work, if Europeans are depended upon alone, and everything points to conferring every grade in the hierarchy on the native assistants.

This measure, which would be quite in order, according to the principles of Catholicism, would facilitate the advancement of the work, for the Chinese, who are more and more suspicious of anything which looks like foreign intervention, would not show nearly so much opposition to a religion, in which they, themselves, were freely admitted to the priesthood. But there are serious difficulties to be overcome. A Chinese bishop could not submit to the vexations which the Government of the country could inflict on him, without grave loss of prestige. From these humiliations the European missionaries are only preserved by the fact that they are foreigners. Thus we find all the problems which the evolution of China is raising among the Jesuitical orders, reappearing in the working of the Missions.

In the afternoon the Father took me over all the buildings of which he himself has been the architect. We went through the class-rooms, through a courtyard fitted as a gymnasium, where the sickly children of the district were doing exercises to make them more robust. I then visited the dispensary, kept by two Chinese nuns, one of whom had a face of sweet serenity very rare in a Chinese woman.

But my host well knew what would give me most pleasure. He led me into a class-room where about twenty pupils between the ages of eight and fifteen were assembled. The instant I appeared a cry was fired off like a volley : "*Bonjour, Monsieur !*" It was the French class. I looked at the children closely. Their eyes were sparkling with mischief in their old-looking

faces. I spoke to one of them, asking his age. As he was slow with the answer it was whispered by others, and I heard the furtive murmur slip out; one might really have been in a school at home. These pupils had just the same rather hard vivacity, the same wide-awake but defiant and uncompromising expression of so many of our peasant children. Human types are expressed more definitely in children than in adults.

The children were put through an exercise in pronunciation from which they emerged very successfully in spite of the difficulties it held for them, but I was more surprised by their exercise-books than by anything else. The use of their pencils and brushes must have made their fingers singularly supple, for no one could have told that the words and letters that I saw in those books were traced by the hands of Asiatics. By that time all shyness was dispersed, emulation was the only force in play, and I had no sooner put a question than answers rang out. And yet these children have only been studying French for a few months.

It is very difficult in the first place to get their parents' consent to withdrawing them from working in the fields in order that they may attend the Jesuit school. When they first come they have to be given instruction in Chinese, religious teaching, and lessons in geography and arithmetic. There are only two Lazarist Fathers here to accomplish all this, with the assistance of a few Chinese schoolmasters. Very often the director of this district is the only European in the place. But the French class is to him a luxury and relaxation. Whatever his other occupations may be he will strain every nerve rather than allow it to lapse.

Thus these village children at the other end of nowhere, have gained some knowledge of our language, though the influence of France could never have come near them but for the missionaries.

When the tour of the Missions was over I went back to the river bank and entered one of the poor dwellings.

It consisted of a single room. The main features in the room appeared to be the huge Chinese cooking-pot, and a low, wide brick platform which served as a bed for the whole family. The oven-furnace warms it from beneath. It is not a bad arrangement as long as there is no chink in the masonry, otherwise the whole family run the risk of being suffocated.

I rejoined the Mission director and as he was about to call on the chief of the river police I went with him. We crossed the river in a ferry-boat, passed through the village and found ourselves above the river again. The police junk was anchored below, with its sweeping hull, its single mast, where a blue and red flag was flying, and its gun in the bows under a shelter of sheet-iron. On these junks the canvas cabin-tent is aft. A string of native drinking-shops runs from the top to the bottom of the bank. We went into a little room and sat down. Our host soon arrived. He was fat and scant of breath, and assiduous in his attentions. We were offered tea, fruit and cigarettes. He is in command of the six police junks, and the river traffic is important. After a little conversation our host took us to see his own vessel, and after we had admired its spick-and-span condition he gave orders for a boat to be lowered to take us back across the river.

During the crossing he carried his politeness to the length of telling the missionary that he would become converted to Christianity were it not for the sorrow it would cause his old mother. This is a reason which is very often advanced and is a proof of the power of women in the Chinese family. The faith that he does belong to is a sect with a fair number of adherents, which is perhaps only the residue of some secret society. All the members have to abstain from wine and tobacco, and, above all, they must vow not to pronounce the name of Kuan-yuin. When they are induced to become Christians it is on that last point that they are definitely tested. They are given the characters which form the name of this

Budhisattva and are quietly asked to read them aloud. They shudder and break into a sweat before they can bring themselves to utter the name.

In conversing with the Father I happened to say that his position must surely bring him in little advantages. The missionary answered that he never accepted anything of the kind, not even the fish which the fishermen try to present to him. The chief of the police in the village is strictly scrupulous in the same way. This recalls the report of the first missionaries to China on the absolute probity of the Customs officials with whom they had to deal. The same honesty is still to be found here and there, though as a general rule officialdom and business concerns in China are extremely open to corruption. But a civilisation must have lasted long and gone deep before virtue can send out roots into every part of the population.

When we got back from our visit the Father strolled up and down with me outside the Mission. It is there that people come to take the air and to ask each other the time-honoured question, "Have you dined?" As we strolled, the quiet sky was turning red in the west, the junks were gliding down-river, and their sails seemed like great triangular patches of light. It would have been a lovely evening, but for the smells.

The peasants have sown a great deal of hemp this year because the locusts never attack it. But with the short-sightedness of the Chinese peasant they have sown too much and the price has fallen, while the corn which they have to buy is, on the contrary, very expensive. They put this hemp into the river to ret it and the river becomes polluted with it. "But if *that* were all in the way of pollution!" said the missionary with a groan.

After dinner I went out again. The evil smells were no better than before, perhaps worse. The moist-looking moon shone white above the white wreaths of mist rolling across the plain; but for me that moon

was shining over a world which had not a particle of power over my imagination ; shining over squat houses where human beings crawled through a life which was foreign to me, foreign but not curious, indeed, pitifully uninteresting.

We never consider enough how much enchantment is added to the light of sun and moon by the nature of the things they are shining on. The pale radiance of the moon would have intoxicated me shining over the glory of a desert, it might have charmed me falling veil-like over more mysterious dwellings, more lovable human beings, but here, where it merely lit up the surface of this stark dumb land the moonlight was poor, dull and inadequate.

The next morning we all started together very early travelling in Chinese carts, a separate one for each of us.

The young missionary was going to his new district, the Director of headquarters and myself, accompanied him. The plain was overlaid with floating autumn mists which gradually disappeared as the sun grew more powerful. We went first along the muddy village street. A detachment of the police preceded us sounding the trumpets. People looked at us with a dull expression which did not seem to register the fact of our passing, dogs roamed about, pigs dabbled in mud, old red rags fluttered on strings for good luck. Here and there a rich man's house lifted its roof higher than the neighbouring roofs.

When we had left all the houses behind we came to a ruined gateway in an old wall. The police formed up into two ranks ; we passed between them and drove out into the country. Oh ! that melancholy plain of China !

I will not relate the events of every day that I spent driving about it in the austere cart of the country, which is quite the most uncomfortable thing that you can imagine. There are no springs to the cart and you can only sit down under the canvas hood by twisting

up your legs underneath you. As the roads are very bad the wheels are always sunk into deep ruts, and there is no means of softening the rigour of the perpetual jolts. If you try to go to sleep your dozing head is banged against the support of the hood. You try earnestly to do a little reading, and though you follow the line along with your finger the terrific bumps send the words jumping about in confusion. You must resign yourself to bumping along, gazing at the plain which is vast without grandeur, at the stubborn, unyielding earth which has mocked this year at man's desperate toil.

And yet the tour would not have been unpleasant would have had some charm if it had not been for the desolate landscape. When evening fell we would arrive at some village. At that hour there would be one great star in the sky and one small lamp in the church which we would enter for a moment. We used to start the next morning at dawn and it had the effect of watching a layer of dirt cleaned off a picture when gradually the white rump of the horse in front of the mules emerged from the gloom. But when day had fully broken and the sun was climbing, it was the ancient, worn-out stuff of Earth which met my eye in the pale, nebulous flickering light and heat of the Chinese plains. There I saw stunted beans, a crop of millet which had come to nothing at all, and maize-ears in a state of abortion. Here and there I saw the gleam of saltpetre in the soil.

Sometimes we passed through villages where the walls of the houses seemed to be merely soil risen up from the earth; the houses did not stand out from the surrounding landscape at all, and an emaciated inhabitant who stared at us did not stand out any more vividly from the walls. We walked along beside the pond and the threshing floor. Two village wives were squabbling hard, and the noise of their shrill abuse was the only sign of life in this mournful place. It is not a spectacular famine, and the traveller may be inclined to think that

the reports he heard were exaggerated. But the further we went the better we were able to judge of the general distress.

The villages were half depopulated. The people who still hung on to life and their homes had no outlook before them, but the awful prospect of coming finally to the end of their provisions and of shrivelling up slowly in the sinister idleness of famine, huddling together like bees in winter, in order to take advantage of each other's body temperature. There were others who made an effort to flee. One might often meet carts laden with bales, which also carried an old man, a woman and children while the husband walked at the mule's head. The humbler folk were fleeing on foot, the father shouldering the long bamboo pole with a pannier with a baby in it at each end which is used for carrying children here, the mother rather behind, staggering along on her triangular stumps, and when I considered how many leagues she would have to cover in this way I could not help feeling a strong aversion to a form of coquetry only suitable to the estate of a marchioness which is inflicted on the poor of the female sex in China. The fugitives were bent for the North, for Manchuria, where they might hope for land of their own but not for houses, and where many of them were destined to die of cold and hunger during the winter.

Others found refuge in another way: the father of the family having sold his beasts of burden, the whole family feasted for the few days that the money lasted; then when these tragic revels came to an end, the head of the house threw arsenic into the pot where the last meal was cooking, and thus of their own free will, the whole family sought rest.

And yet not a leaf, not a blade of grass is allowed to waste here. The peasants cut off the turnip-tops and salt them for winter use, and I used to see children gathering the poor, coarse grass from the roadside banks. And yet even at this time of acute distress, the old customs

survive. One morning when we had left the carts to take a little walking exercise, we met a young man carrying a bamboo on his shoulders with a pot swinging at each end. The missionary asked him what the pots contained, it was one of the most ancient forms of human nourishment, a mess of boiled millet. The young man answered the question most courteously, and then, even in this denuded district, where literally every mouthful was more precious than rare jewels, he did not neglect to give the required invitation: "Will you not partake of it?"

The life of the Chinese peasant is a hard matter at the best of times. Their pleasures are limited to the festivals of the twelfth moon, the fairs, and the passing of a troupe of itinerant players.

They have nearly all abandoned the opium habit, but have replaced the opium with something worse, a very impure form of morphia. This drug is contraband, and is brought in by the Japanese every year by the ton. It is always at the Japanese pharmacies that the peasants are introduced to its use. In the towns, however, this sinister traffic is so arranged that the purveyor and the customer never come face to face. The customer goes to a house which has been made known to him, where there is a hole in the wall. He passes his arm into the aperture, holding the few pence of the fee in his fist. When he feels his arm clutched he opens his hand, the pence fall out of it, the hypodermic needle goes into his arm, and the man goes on his way with the poison in his veins.

In the present condition of China it is the peasants who suffer most. And yet, political disturbances do not entail the same consequences that they would have in Europe. The government here is on the surface of the country, and it never sends down roots. Even if government collapses, the old customs are maintained, the

different social groups keep up the same intercourse, and relative order subsists.

But in the houses, in the temples, in the streets, indeed everywhere you see gloomy-looking soldiers, rather like seedy, undisciplined students. They are the parasites of the poverty-stricken countrymen. Their exactions exhaust the peasants' resources; until the latter lose their heads, begin to doubt the very existence of justice or order, and in their misery are willing to abandon themselves to any excess for which opportunity arises; and Bolshevism might win them over as easily as any other form of madness.

Not long ago the poorer inhabitants of a village taking fire from revolutionary speeches, resolved that all the land of the neighbourhood should become common property. They announced their intention to the wealthier landowners at whose expense the scheme was to be carried through, and the latter were afraid to resist. The business was almost accomplished when a mandarin with more determination than the rest, put a stop to the whole business by making examples of the ringleaders.

And yet these peasants cling to the old virtues. I remember the evening when this was brought home to me most clearly. We had left the young missionary at his new post, where he would be breaking fresh ground, and I was now travelling on with the Director of Headquarters. I was so worn out by the jolting of the cart that I had decided to walk, for a time. The sun was sinking and soon touched the horizon. A lark went up from the parched soil, and when it flashed across the disc of the sun I saw the tips of its wings flutter like silver lashes above the glorious golden gaze of the daystar. Very soon the sky faded to colourless ether with a few ragged clouds trailing across it. Then across the immense stretch of the plain I saw the point of an unexpected little spire. It was an ascending line in this vast, sad, horizontal space. It was a message from Europe. It announced that we were arriving at our destination,

at a village almost entirely converted to Christianity, where there was a resident Chinese priest. The carts stopped and we got into them again, for however humble our destination it would have been an offence against our dignity and that of the dwellers therein, if we had arrived on foot.

We were welcomed by the Chinese priest who made excuses for the bad dinner which was all he could offer us. He spoke his own language with my companion, and his communication with me was limited to a few very abrupt phrases of most barbarous Latin, eked out with a great many smiles. When we had concluded our brief repast, we went into the large assembly room, where the peasants who had been invited to meet the Director were already arriving. I can see them still. After having made a bow they remained standing. Those who had a pigtail, had let it fall in token of respect. The headman of the village was of a ripe age, upright and withered, with a white imperial, his face furrowed like the soil. At the other end of the semicircle stood a long-haired young man with his hand on his hip in an attitude which had unaccountable elegance. The Director, who had put on Chinese garments, and was smoking a Chinese pipe, was very much at his ease with them. He asked questions, and generally provoked them to reveal themselves. No one paid the least attention to me, and I enjoyed the scene as an invisible spectator.

The only lamp in the room just managed to cast its rays high enough to illumine the holy images on the walls. The peasants listened attentively to the missionary; sometimes he would make them laugh, and then you would see the white gleam of their splendid teeth across those faces, almost awakened to expressiveness at that moment. There was nothing either rebellious or plaintive in their tone, although, as I heard later, they were relating their misfortunes. The old headman was explaining that if help did not soon come several families would have to emigrate, and they had no idea

where to go. The drought had put the finishing touch to their distress. Three years before they had been ruined by floods. They had then been obliged to borrow at the paralysing rate of interest of the country, so that their autumn harvests, then only just appearing above ground, would never again belong to them. The poorest had, moreover, already come to eating grass.

The Director listened attentively, promising that on his return journey he would visit the mandarin of the nearest town to consult with him as to what could be done.

I looked wonderingly at these unfortunate people. In any state of universal anxiety we find that the peasant is worth more than any other type of man. Disciplined by the inexorable tardiness of growth and the seasons, absorbed into the rhythm of the planets, they are, of all human beings, the least easily thrown off their balance, certainly less easily than the feverish town-dweller.

Those particular peasants looked simple, frank and good. They looked as if all I had been told about them must be true. Misfortune comes upon them without intermission, and they have no idea of the nobility of their own fortitude. Being taciturn, they are not always turning their souls inside out for inspection, and preserve those serious retreats of the mind where the virtues flourish, which are too often rendered inaccessible by our incessant abuse of words. Their attraction for me was all the deeper for the menace which modernity holds for existences such as theirs. It seems that humanity is tending more and more to the exhaustion of its reserves, to the forcing of all reserves into the forefront, trying to snatch something immediately useful from each one of them, though they would serve humanity much better if they were left alone. But this is the age when nothing is left alone. The time is not far distant when even old women will be given a vote, as though no one in authority was capable of perceiving that it would be impious to trouble the peace of these spirits

already more or less withdrawn from the world and given up to the rearing of small children, the considerations of preparing nourishment, and, in this humble fashion, of guarding the spirit of the race. To give them a vote is a mockery.

Changes of this kind cannot be made without serious loss to the riches of intimate life. There is a sort of inverse grandeur in humility. Humility is like a lake at the foot of great mountains. The peaks are reflected in it. *The less humility we have, the more we shall be buried alive in mediocrity.*

These are the reflections which resulted from my meeting with these poor peasants of China. When the Director turned and began to talk to me however, they waited a moment or two, and then melted silently away, returning peacefully to their unceasing round of hardship.

This is the country where our missionaries of France live and work. It is not enough to pay them an absent-minded tribute of admiration; we must make an effort to present their lives as they live them. It is an honour to our country that in spite of the devouring egoism of modernity, and contrary laws, recruits are always forthcoming. They arrive in China still animated by their first ardour, and they find themselves lost in a vast indifferent world which does not so much repel them as ignore them. Their complete immunity from danger in ordinary times is perhaps a deliberate method of deceiving them, although it may seem reassuring; thus, led astray by old China they must learn to re-discover the grandeur of their task in conditions which seem to epitomise everyday life at its most ordinary level. It is no use either, depending on their elders and predecessors to soften their trials, for it is not in the nature of men, even the best of men, to spare others the hardships that they have been forced to pass through themselves.

Men would rather believe, as they always state, that these hardships are inevitable for novices in any walk of life.

For the rest, as soon as one of these young priests knows enough Chinese he is established at a Mission post where he is nearly always the only white man in the district. Therefore, in order to establish good relations with his neighbours he *must* perfect himself in a language whose whole spirit is repugnant to our genius. In every single particular of his new life he is obliged to break with all his home associations, habits and tastes. To mention only one hardship, he probably has to struggle with months of bad health and distaste before he can accustom himself to the change of diet.

The native Christians who are in his charge are spread all over a large tract of territory, and it is his duty to visit the different groups. Here in the plains of the North the climate is always at one extreme or the other; the summer is burning, and the winter glacial. Very often the floods come, the plains are under water, and the only way to get about is by punting cautiously for fear of running upon some hidden excrescence which would capsize the boat, or of losing one's way in the great watery waste. When he does arrive at his destination, as the native Christians are always amongst the poorest of the poor, he must remounce all idea of comfort or even of cleanliness in any lodging he may obtain for the night, sometimes being forced to lie beside people suffering from grave or even repulsive illnesses. Then forgotten, lost and crushed in a country which stifles him without noticing his existence, he has a vision of all that he has left, a vision in miniature, set very, very far away from him, of his country, his home and his mother.

One of these men admitted to me that he had often wept at night in the first few years. "But," he added with touching simplicity, "I got accustomed to it after seven years of it."

They stay for ten or twenty years in China without ever returning to France. And they fear the cruel sweet-

ness of that return. For the ties that they snapped bind them fast again, and the bitterness of the second sacrifice is almost unendurable, for it has to be made without the fire or the ignorance of youth. Tired, weakened, worn to pieces, they must renew the sacrifice in order to start once more.

There are cases where they come to love their flocks, and to adopt their point of view, by degrees. If by chance they visit a big town they even think like a Chinaman, and are astonished at the prominence of the European noses. Those who take to the life best are men who come of peasant stock at home and in passing over the immense terrifying gulf between the two worlds they are simply going from one peasant community to another.

I well remember the days when we arrived at the new residence of the young missionary who was travelling with us to take up his duties there. We had arrived about midday at the little town where he was going to live The church and his house were covered with staring new whitewash, only beautified by the sunshine. I heard the young priest saying cheerfully that there was nothing wanting as we went over the house, where it seemed to me that every comfort was lacking. Give him a harmonium and he was in heaven!

After lunch, as we had had our arrival announced to the assistant governor, we went to pay him a visit. His house was on the main square nearly opposite the church. It would have been more natural and convenient to build the church exactly opposite his house, but he made an imperious demand that this should not be done. The superstition which he was obeying was that of the *fong-choei* which is one of the most powerful in China. These two words mean respectively *air* and *water*. It is a combination of very ancient beliefs relative to orientation, and according to which there exist above

and below the terrestial surface a number of currents on which the luck of human beings depends. Thus the prosperity of a family can be explained by the favourable position of the tombs of their ancestors. And so it is imperative that nothing should cross or obstruct these influences. No high building can appear in a neighbourhood without arousing general uneasiness. So as soon as the assistant governor had reason to believe that the new building would block out these currents he made a stipulation that the church should be built a little to one side.

Some of the functionaries whom we met on our visit thought it would interest me to visit the prisoners. A door was opened from one side of the square into a narrow court. About ten poor wretches were disclosed, naked, or half-naked, some with irons on their necks and ankles. But I must admit that they all looked quite tranquil. They saluted us with a great outcry, and we heard their leg-irons clanking. I went into their one and only room. On the boarded platform which served as their bed, only one man was lying. He was ill. His face had a greenish tint and he was wrapped up in a ragged blanket. He opened one eye to look at me and shut it again. Bugs were clinging to the walls in patches. The only bright, clean things in the room were some spare leg-irons hanging up on hooks.

When I went out again a prisoner who was quite naked addressed us brusquely, and the officials, who were with us, hushed him up most unceremoniously, not harshly, but as if they were quite scandalised by his bad manners. It seems, that having pawned his breeches, he was asking to be supplied with another pair.

As far as I could judge the prisoners had not criminal faces for the most part, and, indeed, I was told that there were no serious defaulters among them. At the same time many of them would probably stay for years in that prison.

A few minutes later the Director and I started on

again. But as we jolted over the arid plain in the twilight I was thinking of the young Frenchman we had left behind. I told myself that he knew what being alone meant. He was alone in his appallingly new house, where he would not find a trace of any human occupier, alone in that town where not one familiar sound, such as an old clock striking, or the beat of the blacksmith's hammer would reach his ears. He was alone in China. A poor little unrecognised sower who had gone forth sowing, clutching a handful of grain while he stares down at the inhospitable aspect, the hostility of the foreign soil.

A few days later we halted for lunch at a fairly important town. My companion was conversing with the Chinese priest who was our host. Not much attracted by the choice of viands, I was engaged in looking about me, and there in the ancient house of a mandarin, which had not been disfigured by a foreign decoration, I saw two portraits hanging on the wooden partition. One was that of a clear-cut, definite, haughty face, worthy to oppose the Destiny evoked by the poets, the other was a rough-hewn, naïve face, bold, engaging and intensely masculine, but tempered by the serenity of a splendid forehead. The first was a portrait of Marshal Pétain, the second of Marshal Foch. I was much moved at finding these two portraits in a Chinese house. But it was no matter for surprise to a believer even if it were a matter for rejoicing to a Frenchman. It even seemed to me that the essential characters of the two men stood out more clearly because of their exotic surroundings, their isolation. These two great Frenchmen, military commanders as they are, appeared there, less as conquerors than as administrators of justice. Far from being apologists for brute force, they bore witness to the fact that force without a soul had fallen before their onslaught. Relations must surely be established, and

vibrating forces exchanged between the poor priests who pass through this house, obscure soldiers of a faith, and those famous warriors, armed protectors of an ideal.

We sometimes came upon very old towns in these lifeless plains. Suddenly, at a bend of the road, you would come upon a great wall enclosing a space, and the wall was the colour of earth. These brick ramparts take your mind back to the most ancient civilisations of Asia. There is an undercurrent of poetry in a journey through China, and it consists in hearing echoes from all the antiquities of the world.

The constitution of the family, the domestic cult is taken from Greece and from Rome. The ordering of things in general, the rigorous orientation of towns and houses, the dreary overflowing crowds in which the individual is lost, all recall the ancient Chaldees who were also cruel, practical and learned, great observers of the stars, and firmly attached to the soil and its culture. In other connections, some lost detail or a few characteristics already almost blotted out, throw the mind back further still to a more distant and mysterious age, to that first civilisation of the Pacific, which is only just beginning to be unveiled, in which China appears to have had relations with Oceania and America. The squatting posture which is seen all over China is reminiscent of the fact that it was in that position that the Caribbeans took their rest. Or the flattened profile of some passer-by reminds you of the Red Indians, who are yellow men, after all, in spite of the name of their tribe; and you remember that in the earliest days of China, in the reign of the fabulous Emperor Choen, the principal officers of State were called the Pine-Tree, the Tiger, the Bear and the Striped Bear, just as they would have been in the Red Indian Council tent.

The outstanding feature of China is this: there is nothing on the surface to attract or to fascinate; but on

the other hand, a passing moment may be embued with the deep-laid mystery of centuries, and the present is *never* cut off from the baffling, tantalising past.

On one of the last days of my tour with the missionary we passed during the afternoon through some of the most desolate country that I had seen. The only sign of autumn was to be found in the scarlet leaves of a few pear-trees. and in the dry tufts of some feathery plants, which are used here as brooms. In their autumn garb they are really too yellow or too red, and look like those dyed grassess with which lower-class people in France delight to adorn their rooms. There was none of the vibrating force of colour in anything else which met the eye in that dreary landscape. Everything seemed to be in the last stages of exhaustion and anæmia.

A few locusts lying at the side of the road where I was walking, could hardly take the trouble to jump awkwardly out of the way of my advancing feet. The sun was sinking in a sky blurred and smeared with clouds. A wall ran along the horizon, with one of those airy buildings rising from it which are always built over the gate of a town. Tired out, I climbed back into the cart. A moment later, when I looked round, I saw that we were joining a silent procession of carts and pedestrians all making for the town. There was not a sound but the creaking of the axles. This silent convoy seemed to weave its confusion into the shadow of the twilight. Very soon the gate yawned open before us with a few soldiers loitering on each side of it, who hardly turned their heads as I passed, making no objection to my ingress. Inside the ramparts there were more parched fields, and the road became a cutting between two banks with low houses built on them. A flight of rooks came heavily down as if they really had not the strength for anything else, a limp flag hung on its staff like a fire that is dying out, the shadows that were already gathering on the ground-level seemed to concentrate in some black pigs who were grunting beside the road. Here

and there, an emaciated man holding to his breast a little child which must have been born to him in his old age, stood high on the bank, his silhouette made more slender and more definite by the wan twilight.

I thought of the names which Marco Polo gave to the vast provinces of Asia, and in imitation of him I felt that I was arriving in the Province of Decay that evening.

Our carts passed through a narrow street where I noticed the ruins of several of those porticoes which were raised in honour of the most virtuous widows. As I passed beneath them I tried to make out the details of the scenes carved on the lintels, but the stones were as much worn away as if they had been retrieved from the bottom of the sea.

Our mules stopped, a door opened, we entered a court which was bordered by a tangled garden, and in the last gleam of the daylight we saw a man coming to meet us, a missionary, a thin, wiry man with a highly-strung face and a square beard. It was the Jesuit Father whom the Bishop of Hsien-Hsien, M. Lécroart had instructed to look after us, and this was the first of his many kind attentions. During dinner we talked of the soldiers who were in possession of the country. A whole division had been sent against the troops of the south by the Government at Pekin. They had no sooner arrived than their artillery was captured and they returned to the North without it. They had arrived a few months earlier, during the civil war, but their Commander-in-chief had not considered it advisable to take any part in it, and had camped in the towns where the soldiers were still more or less in possession. There had been some idea of demobilising the men, but knowing that they had not the remotest chance of ever receiving their arrears of pay once they were disarmed, they took care that this scheme should not be carried through. They preyed upon the civilian population which did not desist from its ordinary occupations on that account, any more than a peasant will leave off cultivating his bit

of land under overhanging rocks, although at any moment the rocks may overbalance and crush the untiring labourer.

Our host told us that shots had been fired the night before, and that there had been an abortive attempt at pillage, which seemed to have been checked simply by the surrounding torpor, like a fire which does not spread because it has nothing to feed upon.

While we talked together by the light of one lamp I was conscious of the oppressive silence of our surroundings outside. Not a sound came to us from the city of decay, and secrecy and gloom. I rejoiced in the pressure of this heavy silence which communicated the quintessence of the eastern world to me as nothing else could. The next day I was awakened by the blare of trumpets. The Chinese soldiers are devoted to this instrument, but what a contrast to our shrill bugle call was that *reveille* which attacked the world of sleep and dreams with the biting force of acid! These trumpet calls are poignant lamentations. You would have said that these particular trumpets were shouting: "What about our pay? Are we ever going to close our fists upon it?"

When the sun was up we mounted our carts. In the dawn-light the city did not seem less decayed than the evening before. There was nothing with any response to the sunshine in it. A few of the inhabitants stood at the doorways and their faces were withered and looked somnolent. We never saw a sparkling fountain, nor a laughing girl, nor a vivid colour, nor heard a cheerful noise to break up the vague nightmare which this city presented to me. As we approached the ramparts I saw a few soldiers going through some drill in a very limp fashion. An officer was walking towards them swallowed up in high boots, and he looked as flaccid and unsubstantial as one of those scarecrows that peasants stick up in the fields to scare away birds.

Near the gate a street-vendor was selling pastries which were so thick that they looked like a bit of the wall.

Oh! strange nightmare of a morning! When, in spite of the trumpets, no one seemed awake but ourselves!

After these pictures the few days that I spent with the Jesuits remain in my memory like an old French print stuck into a Chinese frame. When I arrived at Hsien-Hsien the Fathers were in full swing with the tackling of the famine problem, and in order to make their efforts more efficacious, the Government at Pekin were joining hands with them. Hundreds of children had already been rescued; they were housed, clothed and taught, and they played in the courtyards in complete ignorance of the fate which had been spared them. Of course, this entailed much extra work for the missionaries, besides their usual round of duties in the dispensaries, the orphanage, and the college, where more than two hundred students receive instruction.

Sometimes I would go into a lecture-room. Little plants bloomed on the desks, every student making it a point of honour to have one standing beside his case of brushes, after the manner of the scholars. At the end of the hall a Father with a long, thin, silvery beard was giving his lecture. An epitome of the lesson was set out in Chinese characters on the blackboard beside him. This he had written out beforehand. The old professor welcomed me with the cordiality of a man of the world, and yet he had been forty years in China, and for most of that time he had been solitary in deserted villages for the more acceptable posts at the college are reseved for the older men. I went on into the library, where all the learning and tradition of the Jesuit Order is preserved. I opened some of the old books where so many penetrating observations are to be found. There would be more of them if the Jesuits were not obliged to guard against the translations which might be made and scattered broadcast in the country.

Another day M. Lécroart drove me to the mission

cemetery. It is in a meadow at the foot of a wooded hillock which has been made by the labour of man, and is itself the last resting-place of some prince of Antiquity. There I saw the graves of the missionary martyrs of 1900. The Bishop pointed out the position of the grave where he would lie, and he smiled. To live at anchor in this way must give a man far more freedom of spirit than the ordinary being's reckless self-abandonment to vain longings, efforts and chances which make life a fever, and bring to it neither strength or security. Like a willow drooping over a stream, man can mirror himself in his own tomb.

Thus for some days I duly appreciated the fine austerity of this life which is at the same time permeated with a spirit of cheerful good fellowship and good company which is proper to the Jesuits, and seems to predestine them to labour in China. The piety of other orders is more spontaneous and obvious. The priests are for ever going into church as if to re-inspire themselves by communion with God. But the Jesuits think they gain more by appearing more worldly. Their piety is more discreet and subtle. They are accomplished psychologists and have decided to meet the layman on his own ground.

During the few days that I stayed at Hsien-Hsien all the missionaries of the Vicariate were in retreat in the Mission. I therefore hoped to meet Father Wieger, that indefatigable scholar, whose well-stored books are indispensable to any student of Chinese subjects. But he had recently been very ill, and was therefore unable to make the long, difficult journey from his distant post.

After a frugal lunch at the Bishop's table we went out into a cloister, where the Fathers were enjoying the sunshine. There I met both residents in Hsien-Hsien and others who had come in for retreat, but had either finished it or had not begun their days of silent meditation. One of them had been wounded

in the war and moved with difficulty because of his artificial leg, but the inconvenience that it caused him was not, and never can have been, reflected in his smile.

We began to converse together. In the conversation of these men there were none of those fatiguing facile generalisations which cannot be answered, which pretend to be derived from vast general knowledge, before any subject has really been gone into. On the contrary, it seemed to me that these men used the ancient qualities of our race, penetration, moderation and *finesse* as lightly and cleverly as a watchmaker handles his small, shining tools. The Jesuit is nothing if not an observer, and never was the quality of observation more necessary than to Europeans in the China of to-day. A new China is rising around them, and anyone who is not perpetually on guard risks being surprised by realities to which he has lost the clue. When I had exhausted my questions on China, the Jesuits in their turn inquired into the state of France. Then as I attempted to paint for them the daily courage, gallantry and cheerfulness, with which the most honest, moderate-minded, and I may say, the most misunderstood people in the world have taken up the broken threads of life again, I saw their eyes fixed on me as they drank it in, I saw the shabbiness of their poor, shiny cassocks, and thinking of the life they had led and how much faith, reason, and patience had gone to the living of it, I knew I had no need to seek for models other than themselves as I spoke to them of French virtues.

BOOK III

THE YANG-TSE

CHAPTER I

I HAVE left Pekin for good and I am in the train bound for Han-Keou, a journey of about forty hours. The train is encumbered with soldiers, so much so that you are forced to ask yourself what pleasure they find in being perpetually on the move. They hardly leave any room for the real travellers, and if so far they have abstained from molesting Europeans, it is only because they have a confused sense that it would be followed by consequences unpleasant to themselves. But they are for ever on the brink of becoming insolent, and, armed as they are with rifles, revolvers and ample ammunition, they have too strong a sense of the power in their hands not to break out and use it some day. In the meantime the best way to deal with them is to do exactly what you like without appearing to notice their existence. They are incredibly sharp at noticing the least appearance of hesitation in a foreigner, and will immediately take advantage of it by obstructing him. But if he goes straight at his objective with a calm air of fatality they will rarely run the risk of annoying him.

They are especially obnoxious in the dining-car, and it is really rather funny to see them all established there, sitting at table or sprawling on the seats, while the poor head-waiter and his assistants have taken refuge in a corner, where they have succeeded in keeping one table free. I sat down at that table for dinner this evening. Just as I was beginning my meal the train stopped at a station. A number of passengers got in, and not finding places elsewhere, they thronged into the restaurant-car, which was already full. An old woman and her emaciated son tried to sit down on a seat where

a short, corpulent soldier was already in possession. The soldier gave her to understand that she would find nowhere to sit but the table, and no doubt the son would have acquiesced, but the old woman, who was as shrill and noisy as a magpie, would not be intimidated. She protested her rights until they were all three squeezed on to the bench, and then at last courtesy made a tardy appearance, smiles began to appear, and bows were exchanged, but I am very much afraid that these polite expressions concealed some sorry sentiments ; fear of the soldier in the civilian breast, and in the soldier's, wrath at his own stupidity in not pushing his obvious powers to the limit.

Observing these soldiers, I could not help recognising the spirit which is backing them up, the spirit of those Chinamen who are the firmest support of Bolshevism. They are Chinese of the North who were sent to Russia during the war to work at the construction of the Mourmansk railway. When the Revolution took place they were discharged, and for the most part they took places as domestic servants in Petrograd, where they gave general satisfaction by their docility. With equal docility they executed the most filthy and sinister commissions of the Bolshevists. And then their insolence began to manifest itself.

A witness has told me that they took delight in annoying passengers in the trams, stamping on their feet, and snatching away their cigarettes, to such a degree that my informant preferred to get out and walk rather than submit to their molestations.

I was told of worse things, of a matter so filthily inhuman that it is useful as an illustration of what the combination of Bolshevist and yellow man may arrive at. One day in June 1920, when Bolshevism was so well established that no one escaped the pinch of famine, a Russian walking in the street met a cab-driver whose vehicle he had often used in better days. He was surprised by the jovial and debonair appearance of this

man, who, on being questioned, admitted that he was doing good business. "I earned twelve thousand roubles last night," he said. "But how? Did you have commissioners as fares in your cab?" "No, but they engaged me to take away corpses of people they had shot." "And where do you take them?" "To the Zoological Gardens." This was already a staggerer, and deserved a moment's silence. Then the questioner went on.

"But you did not get twelve thousand roubles for that?" Then came the worst. "No," admitted the cabman. "But, while I was doing it I met some Chinese who bought them off me, to salt and smoke and sell again."

The train is going direct to the South, and I am gazing out of the window. We are still going through the barren country of the North, which man has stripped of its forests with the assiduity of an insect. From time to time a city wall bites into the pale sky with such crenellated battlements as still stand. Far away on the horizon of this exhausted landscape the mountains rise up like great skeletons.

I remember a day when I was staying at Pekin and had climbed a peak in the neighbourhood, over two thousand feet high, from which I had an extended view. Straight in front of me were some slopes worn away by the rain which fell vertically like canvas over stakes. The plain bubbled up far below me, dotted with villages. Everywhere in the North you find that same look of exhaustion and decay, even Nature seems to be in ruins. But in this great barren country, where the yellow soil peels off in flakes, and the slightest wind sends up immense clouds of dust, light sometimes displays its most exquisite pageants. To put forth its full powers it draws in the mountains as allies, turning them to magical blues and violets and rose-colours, and under this abstract and subtle enchantment the country is delivered from the grip of old age—it smiles and "blossoms as the rose."

This evening the appearance of richer pastures announces the approach of the Yellow River, and suddenly I saw its current flowing between dykes and shining as it curved across the darkening plain like the blade of a sickle. The train moves slowly over a very long bridge. To the south the river disappears in a mass of dark hills. A heron stands statue-like at the edge of the silent waters, which are still glazed with a rose-coloured reflection from the West, while different currents struggle against the flow of the main stream. On the next day's journey as we got nearer to Han-Keou the character of the country changed, it became swampy, so that buffaloes sank into it. The roofs of the houses here have a studied elegance, and patches of grey water break up the monotony of the landscape. Everything speaks of our approach to the great river, and when you reach Han-Keou you get your first sight of the immense Yang-Tse, a rolling, greyish-yellow flood.

Next morning early I started up the river on an English boat and went as far as I-Tchang. The river extends into, and actually overflows the formless country that it flows through. It almost surrounds peninsulas of cultivated land and laps the thresholds of low houses crouching on its banks. You see the peasants splashing and dabbling about everywhere, in enormous round hats. Junks come gliding down the river and the end of the rudder sticking up in the water behind them looks like the fin of some monstrous fish which is following them. The boat I was on was crowded. Amongst the passengers were an Anglican bishop and his daughter, two young English couples from Shanghai, and a large crowd of Americans, men, women and young girls, who were going up to Tchen-tou to join the Protestant Mission there.

The United States maintain a mission in all the chief towns, and they are so richly endowed that if money were all-conquering no other creed would be able to rival them. All these passengers had the correct, healthy,

solid appearance which is charactertistic of the average Anglo-Saxon, which makes even the most ordinary personage of that race look as if he or she were worth something. On deck this afternoon two Americans, who were of the type which manages to be virile and puerile in the same breath, were splitting with laughter over the simplest and most obvious jokes.

Two Englishwomen were exchanging little remarks of such extraordinary nullity that you would have said that it must be an innocent game for the purpose of practising themselves in different grammatical terms of their language. The handsome children belonging to these young wives spent the time making a tremendous uproar over their games, and the Chinese, flocking to the barrier between the first and second class, stood watching them by the hour. This simple scene sufficed to define the contrast of the two races, and also, perhaps, the limitations of both. The white children were already in action but, when all was said and done, only succeeded in exciting themselves to the point of folly; the inert Chinese were lost in contemplation, but what did their meditations amount to? Nothing, perhaps?

Towards evening we began to draw near to a little town laid out on the bank, which has an air of being an Italian port, owing to several houses built in European style and a number of arcades. A certain commotion now arose among the coolies on board; the blonde young commander of our boat with a beautiful pink complexion retired to make a toilet, and reappearing with his stick in his hand, went ashore. It was not long before he was aboard again and we were off once more.

Buffaloes moved slowly along the banks with their heavy courageous tread, each one with a child perched upon its back. The sun was going down, and its rays touched some trees and seemed to devour them, and then suddenly the sky was a pure, pale, empty space and its pallor was reflected on the face of the waters which became iridescent.

This is the only moment in the day when the immense surface of the river has any dreamy charm. At any other hour of the day the river winds through the country without succeeding in animating it, and one must finally conclude that the landscape here is as expressionless as the faces of the human beings. This morning the banks grew higher, the stream narrower, and then we arrived at I-Tchang. That is the limit for ordinary navigation. Only a few steamboats built expressly for passing the rapids go any higher up the river.

Formerly there were junks more strongly built than their fellows which went up beyond I-Tchang as well as the steamers, though they sometimes suffered shipwreck, but they were so much preyed upon by brigands that they no longer risk it, and remain huddled together in the harbours. I, personally, had the honour of taking passage from I-Tchang in the French gunboat, the *Doudart de Lagrée*, which was going up to Tchong-King. The day after my arrival the gunboat left at dawn. The town was slowly, noiselessly coming to life, with a dreary absence of mirth or jollity.

At the head of the staircase which leads to the river I saw coffin-bearers advancing. They carried three at once and, calling out to each other, they brought them slowly down to the edge of the water while the family, wrapped up in the yellowish-white funeral garments, followed them down, step by step. Some peasants arrived in a boat with vegetables prettily set out in baskets. They plunged the vegetables into the polluted river-water to give them a freshening before they landed. Some soldiers were loitering at the head of the staircase, and I heard a trumpet call its long lament.

Everything was in spotless order on board the gunboat. Brisk and alert, every man was at his post, and every French face was sparkling with life.

The sun's rays were now touching some big junks anchored at the other side of the river, and they looked

as if they were made of rosewood. Far ahead of us the mountains stretched like a barrier across the horizon. They are the mountains of Se-Tchuen, of all Chinese provinces the most interesting, the land of the great poets. A shiver of pleasure ran through me, though already I was glowing with the adventurous spirit of the morning frame of mind. I gave thanks for the gift of life, and delivered myself up to whatsoever fate might befall me.

We were off. The town slipped by as we watched it, and behind it a vaporous temple seemed to float upon a hill-top in the quivering floods of golden sunlight. It was not long before we came to the first gorge. The steeper mountain-sides seem to compress the river into a narrower course, and the silver thread of a rivulet came tinkling down the rocks to join it. The sides of the gorge were cultivated in layers. A few feathery trees also managed to cling to the rocky slopes. A black butterfly, black like black velvet, fluttered with palpitating wings from one shore to the other in the deep, cool shadow of the rocks, and on the summit of the highest mountain, raised even higher on a mound of earth, stood a little temple, which appeared to be quite inaccessible, burning white in the sunshine, really of such intense brilliancy that it seemed incandescent.

I waited with the utmost impatience for the first of the rapids. The first sign of it was a torrent of choppy waves turned back in their course. Every one on board came to their posts. The officer of the watch gave a few brief orders to the man at the wheel, while the old Chinese pilot who would have made a brave figure in his black velvet coat and fawn petticoat but for the flat cycling cap on his head, which did not suit the sagacious cast of his countenance, now stared with a troubled eye into the boiling mass of waters whose powers of treachery were so wellknown to him. He began pointing sharply about with his long-nailed hand.

And now we were pitched on to the curdled, seething

waters, the floods in revolt. Funnels whirled round as they were displaced, and the river cast the insulting defiance of her foam at us. The gunboat seemed to stop dead still, shuddering, vibrating and vacillating, and the thick smoke vomited from the funnels betrayed the enormous strain on her engines.

All the while the great peaks above us dreamt away the morning hours as usual, like great thinkers, absolutely disdainful of action.

During the afternoon we shot the rapids several times, and some of them were among the most violent of the whole course. There were more to be dealt with in the next few days. I had too much confidence in the *Doudart's* splendid officers to feel the smallest apprehension, at the same time, as navigation goes, it is an excessively delicate matter, and among the few steamboats which attempt it very few get through without accident. With regard to the junks, it was calculated that ten per cent. of them were lost every year when they used to attempt the rapids, and whenever a person of importance was on board of one of them, the junk was always attended by lifeboats.

The rapids alter with the level of the river. Some of them are impassable at high tide, others become more unmanageable when the tide is running down, others again conceal themselves like traps under a level, quiet-looking flow. The river is carried into the rocky defiles with enormous impetus and is tossed about as violently as long locks of hair in a gale of wind. This tormented surge does not reflect anything. The water is yellow and quite opaque, and it is all the sun can do to strike a spark from it here and there on the crests of the little waves. On each side of the turbulent river the great mountains seem to be storing up infinite silence. Their slopes are of a mournful, neutral tint. Indeed, there is little variation in the landscape here. Moreover, its poetry is not to be found in the landscape itself, but is held in essence somewhere mysteriously outside and

beyond it. Just as in the depths of a cathedral when the organ fills the dim spaces with its powerful swell of sound, it seems as you mentally penetrate the magical vibration of the huge notes that you can hear the muffled music of other distances, other proportions, other worlds. It is useless to look for the brilliant landscapes of Europe here in their narrow frames, which force you on in rapid succession from one to another, places where everything appeals instantly to the eye and provokes and awakens attention.

The landscapes of China have a mighty disdain for any such form of admiration. They never appeal to the eye, they never vary from step to step, but what is surely more marvellous, they give you a powerful new realisation of the sheer *extent* of the earth. You feel that you can go on and on for days without ever exhausting the vast space stretching before you. The actual pace of travelling is slackened. For once you have the experience of travelling calmly, very far away from any unpleasant necessity of catching a train. And each day the tranquil stage is brought to a close by the rise of Hesperus. Those unquiet spirits who are only attuned to the pace of Europe, suffer very badly from boredom and impatience in Asia. But, O gigantic Asia! Those who are made to love you listen thankfully to your voice rising to the evening sky in a great poetic chant, and lay their heads in worship on your mighty knees!

This evening we came to a narrow reach which seemed to close in behind us. A pagoda stands on a little tongue of land running out into the river. A little town is built midway along the right bank, high enough above the river to preserve it from floods, which are often sudden and formidable.

When we arrived, all that part of the valley had already lost the sun, which was even then drawing away the patches of splendid, glowing light from the mountain-tops, as cloths dyed vermilion might be drawn away. As we approached the bank the sing-song voice of the

man who was sounding the depth of the water was heard at regular intervals. We were going to let go the anchor, as it is impossible to progress up this reach of the river at night. Anchoring is a delicate operation in any case. The currents and counter-currents must be taken into consideration, and a good bottom must be found.

We were no sooner moored than three men with long beards came aboard the gunboat with a cheery welcome. They were Belgian Franciscans who had come to call on the officers. After a little talk they proposed to show me over their Mission. We landed, and after slithering up the slimy bank we came to a stone staircase which leads up to the little town. It is called Pa-Tong. Only one street runs down its whole length, a narrow street, which was already dark under the penthouses, while here and there arches stride across it, joining the houses on opposite sides by a bridge. A few feeble lights were burning in the shops.

As soon as we were noticed we made quite a sensation in the place. Some of the grown-up people called furtively to their children—"Come quick, to look at the foreign devils!" and the baby-boy leaning securely against his parents would stare at us open-eyed, his eyes shining with the pleasure of all children in a peril from which they know they are perfectly safe.

Standing back a little above the street is a pink *façade* with three bays. It looked old and dilapidated and was quite dusky in the twilight. I went up the short flight of steps which leads to it. It is the hall of literary examinations, and I remembered that Father Huc had slept there on his way back from Thibet.

I found myself first in a narrow court where the water in a semicircular basin is overhung with plants. The whole building is erected against the slope of the mountain-side. After climbing some more steps I arrived at a last court, dominated by a ruined pavilion, which still has a good deal of charm. Some characters painted in gold still gleam on the walls like derelicts from an age that has

passed away. There were no men of letters there then, only soldiers lounging idly about, some sitting and others sprawling. One of them at least was adding charm to the mournful decay of the whole place by breathing faint notes from his flute into the twilight.

The Mission is at the further end of the town. As we arrived I heard a pleasant sound of chatter above me. Looking up I saw a large French pavilion surrounded by verdure and trees. In a few minutes we all went back to the gunboat for the commander had invited the three missionaries to dinner. It was only by chance that there were three of them. Only one really lives at Pa-Tong. The other two occupy a mountain post, two days' journey from the town. The greatest pleasure of the scattered Europeans who meet in China is to have their fill of talk. It was easy to see by the animation and volubility of the three Belgians that they were making up for lost time, compensating themselves for their long solitude. They were young and full of dash and petulance, apparently delighted with China and with their converts. One had a black beard and red complexion, the second a blonde beard, blue eyes and wore spectacles, and the third had an immense Flemish beard, a really sumptuous affair, a mixture of red and gold.

But behind their laughter and cheerful exclamations I seemed to see a vision not only of their opulent museums and wealthy towns, and their wide skies, where the slender steeples are outlined against the spreading clouds, but also I had a vision of that unforgettable Belgium which was the first to throw obstruction across the path of the horrible machine of German warfare, because in among the whirling of its cruel wheels, she threw the only thing it was powerless to crush, the hard, shining diamond of her honour.

The priests gave us news from the interior, where the war is extending down both banks of the river. Le Se-Tchuen has broken free from the occupation of the troops of Yun-nan and Kouei-tcheou. The troops from

the south have evacuated Tchen-Tou, the capital of the province, and they are overflowing into the towns on the banks of the Yang-Tse. There has been little fighting at Pa-Tong itself, but up the river the issues of the war are still much disputed. While the commander and the missionaries discussed these affairs I went out on to the narrow deck.

The night was hot and very dark. I noticed that some glow-worms had fallen into the water and the stream was carrying away the little greenish lights which no longer flickered, and the town on the slope was quite blotted out by the darkness.

The next day, as the gunboat was going to stay one day at Pa-Tong, one of the missionaries took the commander and myself upon an expedition to some gorges which he declared to be very beautiful. As our boat was dragged up the river by two boatmen on the towing-path I interrogated the missionary about the people of the district. He said that the river-folk were rather a wild lot, but that the mountaineers of his own district were quite different. He praised his converts unreservedly, and seemed to have perfect confidence in them, but he also had a good word for all the peasants, saying that they were industrious, hospitable and so courageous that they are not afraid to go tiger shooting with the wretched firearms at their disposal.

Their morals are decidedly good. There are few cases of adultery. As the young girls are married off at the age of fourteen, they really have no time for pre-matrimonial audacities. Not long ago, though, a young girl having yielded to seduction, her father confronted her with a dagger, a rope, and a phial of poison, giving her the choice of her death, but no hope of life. The poor, unhappy girl chose to hang herself. On other occasions, girls in the same case have been given fatal dozes of opium, which brought them to their last sleep in half an hour. But these tragic events are rare.

The Chinese are so good at trafficking of any sort

or kind that they are always able to manage the most delicate affairs. Here is an anecdote to illustrate this. A few years before my visit a girl of fourteen and her fiancé aged twelve both attended the Mission school. One morning when they had gone away together as usual, the girl came back shortly afterwards in a state of the utmost confusion. She said that, as she and her companion had passed a spot supposed to be occupied by a spirit, the spirit had sprung out upon her fiancé and had killed him. The priests went to discover what had happened, and found the poor boy half-stifled by a handkerchief tied over his face, and his head bruised from the blows of a stone. When he came to himself he gave a very different version of the affair, and the girl was obliged to confess that she had desired to rid herself of him by taking his life. Her parents visited the boy's parents, and after loading on excuses, as they naturally would, they asked—"What do you want us to do about it? We will do exactly as you wish." The boy's parents, marvellous to relate, said they would abandon all claim to reparation if the culprit would promise to mend her ways and to make a good wife. And that is exactly what happened. Her fiancé was already a Christian, and she became converted. Her conduct has been irreproachable ever since, either because her feelings have really changed or because she has buried them under an impenetrable hypocrisy.

Many women here, as elsewhere, are the real heads of their households, but many of them are terribly unhappy, especially when they have to endure the tyranny of a mother-in-law. When they come to the end of their endurance they commit suicide, which in China is the supreme vengeance of the oppressed, for thus they bring acute discomfort into the lives of those who reduced them to despair. The act of suicide is frequent enough in this district to have a local name. The people call it "running away to the river."

In spite of the surging of some wild rapids we navi-

gated that reach of the Yang-Tse without damage, and then our boat altered its course to turn up the stream of a little tributary, where the water became clearer and clearer, the higher we went, until it was almost blue, while on each side of us, the mountain slopes grew steeper and steeper. Very soon we found ourselves between perpendicular walls, which the river had cut away from underneath. Some small birds were flying round us, with that particularly pretty liveliness which is habitual to birds who live on the banks of a stream. Some of them were wagtails, the others, I did not know. They were black with a red tuft on the tail, which looked like a flame flaring up when they flew away. They were larger birds than the wagtails. Another bird that we never caught sight of haunted us all the morning with its musical cry. The boatmen were now rowing, and that bird-note and the rhythmic sweep of the oars were the only sounds to break the silence. These gorges seem to give the landscape what it generally lacks, enormous, grandiose structures, fit to arouse emotion, to take one's breath away and to lift one above the level of everyday life. You raise your head; you measure the height of these soaring walls lightly misted over with verdure. Your wandering eye imagines that it has found a whole city in the confused, rugged irregularity of the fissures, the spirals and the vast plateaux. Might it not be a petrified town? You believe that you recognise bastions, staircases, the tops of battlemented towers, and terraces where royalty might take its ease or vent its vexation. Then at the very moment when the vision seems to be crystallising into reality it is all dispersed, and you find it impossible to seize it again.

You thought you had rediscovered Babylon, and behold! it has vanished into the shapeless, expressionless wall of rock. You hear something which might be a shrill cry. It is probably that of a monkey, the sole inhabitant of your dream-city, and as something strikes the water just in front of your boat, the boatman

informs you that it is a pebble thrown down by the said monkey, from the dream-heights.

In the afternoon, when we emerged from the gorges, the mountains which dominate all the surrounding country again came into sight. They are lucky if they manage to keep their very summits free from the invading hand of man. There are cultivated patches hanging on to the steepest slopes, like carpets thrown over a roof. Once our boat was back on the main stream we were carried along at a furious rate, and I realised all the strength of the current. The risings of the river are terrible; it will rise nearly thirty feet in a few hours, and bursting out of the defiles where the floods are surging up uncontrollably, it overflows the plains, causing infinite damage. Towards the end of the Empire, a viceroy who was governing the down-river provinces between I-Tchang and Han-Keou, on the left bank, levied heavy taxes on the inhabitants for the alleged purpose of maintaining the dykes to protect the country from floods. As a matter of fact he took no steps in the matter and hoarded the money himself. But when the river began to rise he sent troops during the night to destroy the dykes on the other bank. It was in vain that the poor peasants guarded their dykes armed with guns. At the most they only killed two or three soldiers, their dykes were thrown down and the river overflowed their fields. But the territory of the viceroy on the other side was preserved by this manœuvre, without any expense to himself, and he asked nothing better.

We left the next day in hot, misty weather, which is usual at this part of the river, and is very oppressive. The trip that day was very like that of the day before, we had rapids, gorges, and grottoes worn away by the action of the current on the rock-wall just as before. The river-folk have a legend that dragons live in these caverns. But when you ask them whether the dragons

really exist they hesitate, and snigger a little, and you find this all over China, where prudence towards the supernatural obliges them to believe in superstitions, while prudence towards human beings urges them to affect incredulity.

The sky above the mountains was light and warm and lustrous. We passed a temple built on a rock in the middle of the river. Its lofty roofs gave it much charm. What dreamers of dreams should we find within it? The boat came along side it and we saw that it was full of soldiers!

We passed through more gorges, and in the afternoon we came to the most beautiful of all. It was like a great arena where earth and water saluted one another with sovereign solemnity, and so gigantic were its structures, that man, measuring himself by these colossal works of Nature, cannot but feel humiliated by the briefness of his own duration and the puny proportions of his body.

The river current never rests in this gorge, but whirls and surges and turns upon itself, spreads itself out, returns and escapes again. The mountain-sides are sheer walls of rock here of amazing depth, and this vertical fall on each side without an irregularity or a projection gives a sense of grandiose fatality. In this marvellous place you seem to be listening to the everlasting dialogue, the two great opposing affirmations of the universe, the eternal flux and the august permanence. The light of the sinking sun stabbed through the nebulous air in great rays. One or two salient rocks jutted out into the water as if to seize it and hold it in their enormous claws.

A little further up river the banks were not so high, a white pagoda rose on one bank and another opposite it, the two of them distributing propitious influences to the town of Kouei-tcheou which we could see in the middle distance. It dominates the Yang-Tse by a series of enormous steps which increase or decrease

in number according to the level of the river, and the season. Directly the river goes down, every one of these overcrowded towns overflows the limits of the city walls and a whole new town of wood rises on the lower level; a township of little wooden cabins which can be run up in a few hours, which are occupied for the winter by the swarms of the surplus population. Plots of this land left free by the retreat of the river are put into cultivation. They have been sown, and already I can see a mist of the pale green blades spreading over them. Water-carriers go up and down the slope like a procession of ants. Behind the ramparts you notice the inflected roofs of temples between the houses.

A number of large junks are moored close to the bank. I saw one of them put off and gain the middle of the stream amid the musical cries of the oarsmen. Some pontoons with cargoes of coal accosted the gunboat. The shrill coolies on board of them became very cheerful and very much excited as they tried to strike bargains. They nearly all have a strip of black or blue stuff rolled round their shaven heads as a turban. The gunboat was also surrounded by small boats full of vendors of eatables (fritters, jujubes and pumpkin-seeds) who always swarm round the smallest assemblage in China.

The coolies carried on the labour of coaling in the highest spirits, half-naked, laughing, joking and chaffing each other, filling and emptying their baskets with the utmost gaiety. Two of them suddenly began to quarrel, their necks stretched stiffly out and their voices raucous with rage. It sounded as if they were barking, and they looked as if they were going to bite. But another coolie intervened and succeeded in calming them, the work went on and the high spirits returned.

There is a nonchalance and freedom from care which is the result of living at such a low level that there is nothing to care about. If these poor people are able to get themselves fed there is nothing in the world which can disturb them. Any little joke will set them laughing.

So must the *corrvé* have laughed from time to time when toiling at the construction of the Great Wall and the Pyramids.

I went ashore and strolled up to the town. On passing through the city gate I found myself in a street where the awnings semi-shaded it from the sun, for the light only passed through it coined into round pieces of luminous gold. The whole width of the lower floor of each house was open on each side of the street, except in the case of one house which had been closed because of a death I believe, as I heard the clash of cymbals within it. A child dressed in white ran out of it to look into a shop near by. It was a fruit shop, and there were *kakhis* laid out on fans, looking round and luminous as small lanterns. There were also pomegranates, with cheerful-looking, ruby-red seeds.

But there was no gaiety to be seen among the people. Their faces are quite unsmiling. The passers-by look quiet and melancholy. Their head-gear varies according to their social standing, some wearing a silk cap and others a piece of stuff twisted round the head. A few of them were carrying their babies, the child, if a boy, decked out with the usual diadem of cloth. I saw a little girl smoking a bubbling water-pipe. Further on I came across a boy of seven or eight years old, sitting at a table with signs and characters traced upon it, and with waxen *poussahs* beside him, risking his whole fortune of a few pence with the coolness of a seasoned gambler. I saw a man in a plum-coloured robe come waddling along a narrow passage, and when he reached his threshold he stood still to stare at me. His startled sickly face had a greenish pallor, and somehow the apparition reminded me of a fish coming to the surface from the depths of its aquarium.

You see a great many plants and herbs displayed in the shops here, and also a great deal of dried fish, which is generally split open. Pimentoes lie like tongues of fire among heaps of vegetables. Bloated joints of meat

are to be seen hanging up simply encrusted with flies, and in the same shop are the huge cooking-pots into which everything will finally disappear which the Chinese consider possible to eat! In the depths of dark littls shops I could see gleaming white heaps, sometimes the cold, closely-packed whiteness of rice, and sometimes the vague, fleecy whiteness of a heap of raw cotton. I saw embroiderers bending absorbed over their work, and flowers more vivid than the flowers of nature blossomed into strange beauty under those fingers which were the colour of dry wood.

The tiny shop-fronts are set out with the meticulous and superfine taste which you find everywhere in China, and sometimes a hand, a long, fine, perceptive hand, would be stretched out to pick up some dainty.

I saw a young beggar writhing on the ground with a mongrel dog beside him. He was apparently very ill, and was almost black in the face. No one was taking the slightest notice of him, but two Chinese gentlemen, one in flame-coloured silk, and the other in grey silk, were exchanging endless courtesies in the ways of bows and smiles close beside the unfortunate beggar.

Then I came to a little square where, amid many fetid odours, a charming little ruined pavilion sought its own reflection in the pool beside it, and failed to find it, for the water was green and absolutely opaque. I was alternately disgusted and enchanted. The truth is that I was feeling intense enjoyment. It was the joy of being alone and far from all familiar things in another world. Now and then the façade of a temple would intervene between the houses. Stone personages traced in relief on these façades were bowing to each other like ceremonious boobies, in real life. The temples were all full of soldiers. Their faces clay-colour, their chests bristling with cartridges, these idle vagabonds, armed to the teeth, did nothing but lounge from morning till night, looking utterly demoralised. They wore a semi-European uniform of cheap grey linen, with cord

sandals on their bare feet, and on their heads the red turban which is the mark of the troops from Yunnan.

Sometimes you have the luck to find the scattered objects of interest concentrated into one authoritative suggestive picture of concentrated magnificence. Once, in the main court of a temple near the leaning trunk of an old tree, I saw one of these morose soldiers leading a little chestnut Tartar horse with a thick white mane and brilliant violet saddle. Behind them a staircase of a few steps led into the depths of a dim open chamber with smooth columns, its dusky atmosphere enriched with gold, and with enormous swaying Chinese lanterns.

In the upper town, which I visited afterwards, the deserted streets are bordered with low walls, with the shrubs and trees of gardens rising above them. I saw one little gate garlanded and wreathed for a funeral. In this quiet atmosphere stood a woman begging with her back against the wall. She was the terrifying victim of disease, her nose and eyes almost obliterated, her mouth a round hole with only one tooth left in it. At the end of that street stood the dilapidated old palace once occupied by the governor, its stately roofs outlined like the prows of ships against the sky. There were very few people to be seen. I saw one pale personage dressed in black, carrying a long, reddish branch of thorn tree in his bony fingers by way of a cane I suppose.

Then a chair came along, swaying to the rhythmic tread of the bearers, a light and elegant chair with a hood of plaited straw, green bands and black silk fringes. A young woman was sitting in it, and as she passed, I swept with one glance from the sight of her little smooth face and downcast eyes to the horrifying aspect of the beggar-woman.

The next morning before we put off, we heard the news that Se-Tchuen's troops had just taken Tchong-King. The troops from Yunnan are on the march all along

the right bank, and one hears that they decamped from Kouei-tcheou during the night. We met a great many junks in flight. We passed an English boat which had suffered damage, but as they called out that they did not want help the crew informed us also that a European had been killed two days before at Tchong-King by soldiers from the South. We saw first one corpse and then another drifting with the stream.

The weather was damp and overcast. Nearly all the heights are crowned by ancient fortifications, and all along the river there are temples half-buried in all the trees that the neighbourhood boasts of, and these temples were all stuffed with soldiers.

Still we met numbers of junks coming down the river. Towards five o'clock in the afternoon the river broadened as it began to flow through a sombre, imposing tract of country, and a black, smoky town gradually appeared to us, out of cotton-wool mists, built on the side of the mountains. This was Wan-Shien. Some pale-yellow and greenish lights still played doubtfully over the surface of the water and the last light of the day seemed to be making an effort to pierce the grey sky, giving the effect of a bright lamp set behind a screen of oiled paper.

We let go the anchor beside the bank opposite the town. Two other gunboats were already occupying this anchorage, one English and the other American, and the mournful, grey atmosphere was already animated by the unexpected brilliancy of their electric lamps. A British officer came on board our boat to give us the details of the taking of Tchong-King. He told us that it was an Englishman who was killed, poor fellow, having come through the Great War, safe and sound, only to fall by a stray Chinese bullet. He had attempted to cross the river in a scout-boat and though he flew the Union Jack, the soldiers from Yunnan would not respect it, and fired several volleys on the boat.

While we were hearing the news, the French missionary of Wan-Shien came on board. Like all the missionaries

of the province he is a member of the Society of Foreign Missions. Our commander asked him to stay to dinner, but he refused regretfully, feeling that he must not be away from his post so long in the state of affairs as they were then. When he landed again, one of our officers accompanied him and I went with them. Night had fallen, and the pale sky was merely wan. Fine rain was dimpling the surface of the river. Our two Chinese boatmen rowed with a jerky stroke and at times did not seem to be making any way against the current. However, we did land, finally, between the junks and began to climb up the slippery slope. The wooden houses which have been run up since the fall of the river seemed perfectly dumb and lifeless.

The city gate was still open. We entered a street where the houses were mostly built on a stone foundation, and were higher than any I had seen before. All the houses were closed, and one felt that the inhabitants were cowering inside their own walls for the night with practically every chink closed against invasion, though one did see a chink here and there letting out rays of some feeble light inside.

For the rest we could see nothing clearly, for our lantern only lit up incomplete aspects of things, which disappeared almost immediately like pieces of rag that are thrown away; first it was dog that might have come out of a nightmare, with a few bristling hairs sticking out of its skin, smelling about in a heap of garbage; then it was an open but quite empty restaurant, where the mouth of the oven was glowing; and next there came across my vison a little blind musician, green as a spectre, holding his primitive form of violin and walking sadly away down the deserted street. We arrived at the Mission. We knocked loudly on a big iron-studded door which was opened to us. We crossed a court and went into some almost empty rooms, where we found two or three wan, discreet-looking Chinamen who have taken refuge at the Mission.

The missionary offered us a glass of liqueur. He is a very good-natured man, whose courage is all the more to be admired because it takes the form of gaiety. We drank to each other, and I looked about me. A few pictures cut out of *L'Illustration* are nailed up on the walls, and amongst them the portraits of the three marshals of France, and when I saw these I felt that I had been granted a vision of the fixed constellation of authority in the midst of clouds of doubt, in the surrounding chaos, a symbol of devotion and ordered government. I thought of the dark, noiseless town paralysed with terror around us, trying to efface itself and to melt away into the darkness.

The position of foreigners is particularly ticklish in Wan-Shien. The port was opened for trade in the first instance by the government of the North, but the South, which is in command here, does not recognise the authority of the North, and has set up its own Customs Office beside the other, so that the resulting difficulties seem to be quite insurmountable. The troops from Yunnan instead of retiring as the troops elsewhere are doing, are lingering at Wan-Shien, because their commanders are said to be negotiating with the victors, with the object of going over to the winning side. In the meantime the soldiers are masters here. They molest the inhabitants, carry off the heads of families, refusing to give them up without a ransom. Those who ever get out of the soldiers' clutches return so broken down with the tortures they have undergone that they still weep over them.

In this China which seemed so well policed, where the supremacy of civilian power seemed so well established, and had roused so much admiration, the state of revolution has brought about a return to the grossest and most primitive conditions of society. Only force counts at present. Not that all was well under the Empire, but, at least, every one was left to pursue his own affairs in peace, travelling could be undertaken without hindrance, and the corruption of officials had,

so to speak, found its own level. The imperial authority was suspended over all thefts and underhand dealings like a shadow which was almost always impotent, and yet there were occasions when its chastisements did fall upon the culprits.

Where is the punishment to come from now, when every one is a partner in the same firm? There are, to-day, old peasants in the interior, very weary of their sufferings, who have never even heard that the Son of Heaven does not reign any longer, and are astonished that their Emperor has neglected his people to such an extent. They think that if he has gone hunting, he has been gone a very long time. It is true that one might undeceive them by telling them that they are now citizens of the great Republic of the Far East, but I cannot guarantee that it would be any consolation to them to acquire this knowledge.

Rivers may be said to be the epics of landscape, and there is as much difference between the precipitous torrents of the Rhone or the Rhine and the immense, slow development of the Yang-Tse, as there is between the *Æneid* or the *Mireille* and one of the vast epics of Asia. During a voyage of this description each day may be compared to one strophe of a poem. Our struggle with the rapids represents the principal activity, the combat which is almost always the subject of a drama. Then when the river has been mastered, towards evening we always find ourselves gliding through a gentler region, where, like a princess waiting for the victor with her hair dressed for a ceremonial, a great town welcomes us, crowned by its bizarre inflated roofs.

The rapids that we passed to-day were perhaps the most violent and unmanageable of all. Three junks were waiting below it for a favourable moment when the tide began to run down. The gunboat dashed into the boiling surf, her engines exerted their utmost power, but in vain; we got no further. The river was on the point of winning, and made no secret of its rage.

It heaved up under the stern, it beat furiously against the sides of the vessel like a battering-ram, it multiplied its hostile forces round us. If in such a dilemma, the vessel seems likely to veer out her course, it is absolutely necessary to put about at once before the boat is thrown upon the walls of rock which wait hungrily on each side for their prey. At last, however, the engines got the better of the current, and we rose slowly up the bank of boiling liquid. And as the fight had been harder, so was the reward more beautiful than usual.

A little later on, we arrived in sight of Tchong-tcheou. Among the towns that we had passed, Pa-Tong was merely a humble little place, Wan-Shien I would describe as sinister, Kouei-tcheou was prosaic and had nothing to reveal, but Tchong-tcheou has the charm and suggestiveness of an ancient deserted city. Its grey ramparts look like a basket full of fresh verdure. As I strolled about the narrow, paved streets with many flights of stone steps, I was constantly reminded of places like Semur, Orvieto and Bamberg. Heavy trees in full leaf, rose sighing in the breeze above the walls, thrown into strong relief by the pale, cloudy sky. Everywhere I saw the feathery bamboo, and planted between them, here and there, I saw banana trees with their broad leaves, cut into teeth like a comb. A little stream fell in bubbling cascades under a small stone bridge, patched all over with moss and lichen, and this rivulet flowed on its way down a fertile narrow gorge luxuriant with lush verdure. In a garden I saw a climbing plant trained to grow along wires, where its progress was marked by the blooming of large, yellow flowers.

Lanterns hung over the discreet-looking doors, round lanterns with an arabesque of a bat traced upon them in simple outline. Sometimes, between the trees came glimpses of tiny pavilions reduced to those miniature proportions which seem to be devised in order to make life small and childish and easily embraced. The only large building was an official palace at the highest point

of the town. The entrance was by a long portico with high pillars connected at the transverse beams by horses and lions daubed with vivid colour, as stiff as pokers, reminding one very forcibly of the painted wood-carving of Scandinavia. I returned by a long deserted street, where, on the carved lintels of an Arch of Honour, I saw mandarins, in effigy, driving in ceremonial procession, a procession which was interrupted here and there by the fact that a stone had been defaced or had fallen to the ground.

I came unexpectedly upon a semicircular open space, shaded by the huge branches of a magnificent tree and shut in by a grey stone wall. There was a view from here of the wooded slope of the opposite bank, and here, the eye could rest on the vast eternal gliding of the river. Some white goats were bleating feebly, and beside this humble live-stock were some fantastic and flamboyant animals carved in stone with twisted necks and haughty heads and open jaws, though the roar that should have issued from them seemed to have been stifled by the moss that had grown there.

At the edge of this space stood the Temple of Confucius, shut in by red walls. On going in, I first found myself in a grass-grown court, at the end of it three little bridges spanned an absurd little moat, no bigger than a ditch. Beyond this was another court, also given up to weeds. Opening from this was the chamber which contained the monumental tablet of the Sage. Between the few steps which lead up to this chamber a dragon is carved on a sloping slab, not the customary dragon you see all over China, but a far handsomer monster, which writhes there on the slab above the regular wavelets representing the sea, hanging its huge head, in fascination over the gaudy jewels which it grasps in one of its paws that are spread widely apart on each side of its rounded body. The whole ruined old monument seems a floating dream. And yet from the school close at hand, there came the sound of students' voices proclaiming

the wisdom which the Master had gathered from ancient texts two thousand years ago. This had been a city of men of letters and poets. They lived here, striking the just medium between temperance and voluptuousness, which was the aim of Chinese wisdom, with the same balance between study and leisure, discreet melancholy and open high spirits. In their narrow gardens they heard the orioles sing, and let their dreams fly away on the wings of the wild geese.

Now the whole place is full of exacting soldiers, just like the rest of China. I have just seen one carried up in a chair, his chest sunken and his head swaying, but he was so young that he hardly seemed more than a child, and when he came nearer I forgot to notice his dress, in my observation of his face. It is the young men who look most absolutely used up in China, but in these crowds of monotonous, indifferent faces, where the only sight that awakens your attention is the horrible appearance of the beggars, it is the young men and not the women who lend an element of ambiguous charm to the throng. They seem to be the derelict princes of an exhausted race, bred to the quivering, highly-strung delicacy of a greyhound, and every one, including the four brawny carriers of the chair, which passed me just now, appears to recognise their supremacy.

Their shaven heads have the astonishing, absolutely even smoothness of a pebble at the bottom of a stream, and like a sinuous plant which is half carried away by the current and then sways back, a strange weak secret smile comes and goes on their lips, haunted by the ghost of a cruel disdain. But the expression on their faces is always somewhat abstract, potential and evanescent, even to the stealthy lustfulness which is often to be caught there. It is the lassitude of centuries which seems to sleep on this admirably smooth skin of theirs which time has not furrowed with a single wrinkle, and the whole experience of antiquity, the immense satiety and impersonal age of the Chinese soul dominates in the

expression of so many of these mournful or supercilious faces which, at their most satisfied, show nothing more than pleasure and contentment in having secured enough food.

The chair had gone past, and now some horrible smells became active. I saw a tiny boy sucking a piece of sugar-cane quite absorbed in his enjoyment. But the details which claimed my attention here were few and far between instead of swarming as they do in other Chinese towns. A very few pedestrians wandered past me like somnambulists. Sometimes one of them would be arrested by my appearance and would follow me for a little way, then, as if his curiosity was too frail a bond to survive the smallest accident, he would stop at the bend of the road and leave me to go on unshadowed.

To-day the weather is very oppressive, and cotton-wool clouds are clinging to the mountain-sides; sometimes you hear the beating of wings as the wild duck passes through the mist like an arrow well sped. Towards noon we had a view of a low town spread out at some distance from the river; this was Fong Tou where the letters are addressed which are intended for the God of the Dead, for tradition has it that the gates of the realms of the departed open not far from this city.

Towards four o'clock we sighted a large black smoky town between the river and a tributary running into it, which is traversed by a bridge of junks. This town is Fou-tcheou. As there is hardly a roof to be seen which is characteristically Chinese, the long range of wooden houses on the bank, the dismal smoky gloom of the general aspect recalls some of the old river cities of the North of Europe.

The gunboat went on to a good anchorage two miles above the town, and then, coming down again in a skiff we landed and climbed up to the ramparts and entered the city. Of all the gloomy cities that I have

seen in China this was the gloomiest. The houses open on to narrow airless streets, and the dim twilight of their interiors has that smoky hue which wood panelling imparts to the atmosphere which it encloses. There were soldiers everywhere, ragged, sinister and bristling with ammunition ; but by one of those indirect processes which play such an important part in social life here, one would say that the civilian population which mixes with them with a phlegmatic air, had determined to try the effect of suggestion on them, and is suggesting with all its might to the soldiers, that they, the civilians, are not in the least afraid of them, and in this manner are trying to stifle their unpleasant potentialities.

Life goes on, but it is life mutilated, deprived of colour and sound, and this general paralysis weighs on the soul like a bad dream. Even the drinkers in the wine-shops sit in taciturn groups. In the shops you see heaps of vermicelli, both cooked and raw ; in one doorway I saw dyer's vats full of a blue liquid, and rows of dried capsicums stuck on skewers. In the poor little jewellers' shop-fronts an enamelled pin is the most elaborate object, which throws off a gleam in the fading light of the stagnant dusk. Many of the people in the streets have the greenish complexion of confirmed opium-eaters. Nearly all the men wear a piece of stuff wound round their heads. Panels with slats like shutters are fitted into the *façades* of the houses, and this gives it the look of an Oriental town, but it is the Orient without sunshine, deaf, dumb and extinguished. Advancing through the crowd, which shrank away from him, I saw a blind man, his face seared with the ravages of red leprosy which had obliterated his eyes.

But the smells are worse than anything else. Pails of filth without any cover stand about everywhere, and the ill-fitting paving stones expose the drains into which the refuse from every dwelling is discharged. The overflow from these drains spreads itself almost with an air of pomp into sheets of filth, breaks out into

bubbles and mixes its disgusting eddies to such an extent that when I passed a stable from which there came a strong smell of horse manure it struck me as such a pleasant, wholesome smell by contrast that I stood still an instant to breathe it in as a corrective. But I had to return to the suffocating stench, and noticing the ease and indifference with which the wan occupants of the street absorbed it, I had a nightmare sensation of being the only one of my species in a weird town built at the bottom of a swamp.

Yes, a very weird town, for amidst this barbaric disregard of hygiene there still exists the extreme refinements of a very ancient civilisation. In the barbers' shops the customers, whether soldiers or civilians, appear to be at their last gasp as they sit down. They look so inert and bloodless that you might take them for corpses. Many of them are probably under the influence of opium. But when the barber has cut their hair he submits them to a gentle smacking on the back, the forehead and on the knees. In fact he gives them general massage. Then he cleanses the insides of their ears and nostrils, and passes a swab of cotton-wool under their eyelids, and probably this last attention is instrumental in spreading granular conjunctivitis all over the country.

We arrived at the Mission, which is built in the highest part of the town. The Chinamen we found there seemed a good deal scared, but this was not the case with the Jesuit Father. He has been very ill, and still is so, but he does not give any thought to taking care of himself, and, indeed, what means has he here for improving his state of health ? He talked with rather feverish volubility, his eyes very brilliant, and interrupted himself constantly to say—" Oh ! I am forgetting the French word for it ! " I found that very touching, for it proved to what extent he had enlisted himself on the side of Chinese life and well-being. He had just received a little letter in Latin from a Chinese priest in Tchong-King, describing the joy and thankfulness of the inhabitants at their deliverance.

Things are not going so well in this town, by any means. Two nights ago the fugitive troops poured in, and the next day constructed the bridge of boats across the tributary in order to be able to escape at the first alarm. Unfortunately, as the victors have not followed them up, these troops have been able to settle in the town, and if they are driven out later they will certainly not go without pillage and robbery of every description. Whilst they are in occupation of Fou-tcheou brigands have appeared outside the town, who are nothing more nor less than more independent and often more undisciplined troops. They would have sacked the town had it not been for the troops inside. Finding it defended they have contented themselves with firing at random on it, and a hail of bullets has come pattering on to the Mission roof more than once.

I went out into an almost musty little garden, from which you get a view of the tightly-packed houses descending the slope of the town, a part of the bridge of boats, the huge yellow current of the river, and the damp, misty mountains beyond. The Jesuit Father is like a rock planted in the midst of all these eddies of danger and misfortune. He never considers his own fate, but he cannot help feeling anxiety for his converts. Many of their homes have been invaded by soldiers who have established themselves there with women, and refuse to be dislodged. Under the cover of the general disorder they are becoming more and more undisciplined, and their insolence is intolerable.

Their commanders, who never pay them, go in fear of them, and have special guards to protect them from their own troops. Two generals are in hiding in the city at the present moment. One of them was the governor of Tchen-Tou who escaped with his two wives, and it is whispered that they are so loaded with bracelets and jewellery that they can hardly move their arms.

The commander of the *Doudart*, who knows this general from Tchen-Tou, has announced his intention

of calling on him to-morrow, and this proposal is visibly cheering to our missionary host, who no longer feels alone and unsupported since the arrival of the *Doudart*.

The missionaries who live in the great seaboard towns, struck by the susceptibility of the Chinese on every point of foreign interference, have perhaps been tempted to repudiate all connection with the foreign element, and it is thus that some of the smaller men, not judicious enough for their ardour, have been led away in the wake of the crowd, which they intended to master and lead. But those who live in the interior, are glad, no, thankful, to take shelter at times under their own flag.

Night was falling and it was time to go back to the gunboat, but the Father kept me back a little longer to show me over the Mission. I went with him up and down stairs and into dusky class-rooms where the failing light still lingered in ragged gleams. This is a school which the Father built for a hundred and fifty boys, and he still counts on being able to bring that number together. He explained all his plans for their education. "Yes," he said, "and I am going to teach them French." And as he spoke in this brave way I was lost in admiration for this man, alone, ill and threatened by many dangers, pursuing his chosen task with the chaos of a whole world round him.

The Commander and I re-embarked in our boat and went up the river again, past the town which was no longer visible. It was a night of soft, velvety blackness. The only light in the whole scene was the Chinese lantern swinging at our bows like a great, luminous pumpkin. We went round a bend and were suddenly startled by the hoarse bark of imperious Chinese voices coming from the impenetrable darkness. They were the voices of soldiers.

"What do they want?" asked the Commander.

"They asked who you were?" answered our interpreter.

"Say that I am the Commander of the French gunboat, just going aboard."

"They say you must stop."

"Say that they have no power to stop me."

The boat continued in its course. Their answer was prompt. They fired on us. "Land!" they shouted. Preceded by the lantern we walked rapidly up the slimy bank to the little group of soldiers, mere youths in rags. A babel of contradictory statements was translated to us by the interpreter. "It was not these fellows who fired. No, there is no officer present. The officers have leave this evening. They are in the town. The soldiers have orders to fire on all boats getting away in the dark. They did not fire on us."

While these contradictory excuses were being conveyed to the Commander I examined the faces of the soldiers by the light of the lantern which the interpreter was holding aloft. In the very harshness with which they defended themselves there was something of the desperate rebellion of an animal at bay knowing that its powers are unequal to the demand on them. But it was just this type of man who killed the Englishman at Tchong-King, the kind of man who often fires on Europeans. We are only at the beginning of it all, as a matter of fact.

After this little incident we got back to the gunboat. We found the officers either studying or immersed in light literature. The men of that watch were at their posts, the others were chatting and laughing together. Everything was quiet, straightforward and orderly. What a relief that atmosphere was after the miserable chaos of the town! The next morning we went down to Fou-tcheou again as the Commander wished me to accompany him on his visits. So once again I found myself in closely-packed streets among the green-complexioned inhabitants, and wherever I went, meeting soldiers so limp and slack that I should not have been surprised if their bared bayonets had melted in their sockets like tallow candles.

As I passed the doorway of a dim room I caught a glimpse of a man holding an otter, of all things in the

world, by a leash. The crouching animal was motionless, then suddenly she made a desperate motion on the slippery parquet floor, her instinctive movement of escape, that of slipping into her natural element, the protecting water, which is her home.

We went first to the Mission. They had passed a quiet night. The soldiers who had billeted themselves on the native Christians had actually decamped, but a proclamation had just been announced that Fou-tcheou must produce a levy of two hundred thousand *taels*, which, at the present rate of exchange, is not less than three million francs, and it seems that the generals were with difficulty prevented from asking double. I do not guarantee that the whole sum will be paid, but it is only too true that the Chamber of Commerce is always ready to revert to an orgy of pillage, and in yielding to this sort of pressure the cities are maintaining the evils that gall them. It shows how much hidden wealth must be amassed in China, that such exactions should be possible at all. Moreover, the generals have ordered the conscription of two thousand bearers. On that account, the bearers are mostly in hiding, and we could hardly find anyone to carry our chairs. We succeeded at last, however, and we set out a party of three, the Commander, the interpreter and myself, with a courier walking before us. We proceeded on our way through a maze of streets, and up and down a great many flights of steps. The houses in these streets can be barricaded, if need be, by great gates with iron clamps.

Carried along like this (and no one of any consequence ever goes out on foot) you are above the petty details which beset a pedestrian. You are on a plane where it becomes natural to look down. To feel disdain is your portion. At last we turned into a courtyard where some soldiers, who were nearly asleep, presented arms. A sergeant passed along the ranks, and if one of the men was not holding his head at the proper angle, he

tweaked the private sharply by the chin, or knocked his head straight, with a well-directed smack.

As we set foot to the ground a messenger came out to usher us in. We went up a staircase which led to a lateral terrace opening out from a large room. Here the General was waiting for us. He was curiously attired in a check grey and blue travelling suit with leggings, crimson socks, and on his feet a pair of "pumps." He is a young man with a bullet-shaped head, prominent cheek-bones and a heavy jaw. He has regular white teeth, rather thick lips, and absurdly pretty, childish little hands at the end of abnormally long arms. He offered us cigarettes, and tea served with *brioches* and burnt almonds.

Soldiers, armed to the teeth, but leaning against each other as if they required props, crowded round to watch us through the framework of the door. The conversation began. As Tchen-Tou, where the General had been governor, was mentioned he asked me if I intended to go up there, as it is the capital of the province. He added with an air of contrition that things were very difficult there in these days, but he gave me to understand that negotiations for a settlement were in hand. He seemed to be making excuses for the war, but his main object, I think, was to diminish the importance of his own reverses. Then followed a long and rather awkward silence.

Each of the two principals of the interview had a subject which he was bent on introducing when the moment seemed favourable. The Commander, feeling that his moment had arrived, now made an allusion to the fact of our having been fired on the night before, and also to the native Christians' homes which were invaded by soldiery. The General replied that he had given orders that very morning that neither of these errors were permissible and that they were not to be repeated.

He is by way of commanding three divisions, each consisting of about ten thousand men, but he is doubtful

of the divisions being up to full strength, and also very doubtful whether his orders would be obeyed. He then began to take a rather officious interest in the progress of our voyage, and took care to ascertain what day we should arrive at Tchong-King, and it turned out that he wanted us to deliver a letter there for him.

The Commander agreed to do so, and we got up, but he made it evident that he wished to ask another favour. At last, smiling and bending his head forward, he requested that instead of carrying a letter we would give passage to one of his officers. He redoubled his courtesies and we could feel that he has had a long training in the expressions of politeness, and that they cost him nothing. Even violence here is accustomed to cloak itself in hypocrisy, and force makes a polite grimace to the last gasp.

We climbed back into our chairs and went to visit the assistant-governor. The general was in hiding in a private house, but the assistant-governor still occupies the proud position of chief civil authority, a palace where edifying maxims are traced on the walls in characters of gold. But it is only the imposing frame of nullity.

We crossed a court where some old guns were standing and some soldiers, as usual, lounging. We were shown into a little room where the assistant-governor soon joined us. He was a stout young man in a black robe, with short hair, who made incredible efforts to keep his eyes open behind smoked glasses, either because he was really worn out, or because he thought it would be telling, to affect this air of languor. After a few empty phrases, as he was told that I was a man of letters, he turned to me and asked me how many school-children there were in France, and then whether the war had made any difference to education there. At first I did not quite catch the drift of this last question, but I understood better when he added bitterly—"For, in this country, the war has put a stop to education."

Then he was silent. His eyes began to blink more painfully then ever. He spoke to me again through the interpreter. "France has not recognised the Soviet Government, I believe?" "No," I answered. "Why do they refuse this recognition? The United States will grant it very soon." I answered that I was very doubtful that the United States would grant the recognition, and that in any case, France was not alone in her attitude to the Soviet, as so far no other great nation had taken up any different one.

"Yes," sighed the assistant-governor, "only China has recognised them."

"Do you believe that?" I asked him, "for if I am not mistaken their delegates have not been officially received at Pekin."

"Yes," he admitted, giving in again, "only the students of China have recognised them."

"Oh! the students!" I said smiling, "that's another matter altogether. The students aren't the same thing as the Government! Besides," I added, "do you approve of their theories and general behaviour?"

I was not simpleton enough to think that he would give me a candid answer, but I was very curious to see what he would answer. He spread out his plump, dimpled hands, and a hesitating, confused look appeared on his face which was quite probably genuine. "I don't know," he said. "I really don't know."

How discouraging these conversations are where everything is slightly distorted and blurred by an interpreter. What really lay behind that young man's questions? Was he only feeling his way in a sort of cautious curiosity, or was he really trying to get some real information out of me as a guide to his own future conduct? Had he real sympathy with the Bolshevists, and had he a lurking hope that they would drive the Europeans out of China?

I tried to get some information about his past life. The only thing I was able to learn was that he had

escaped from Fou-tcheou a few days before and that he had just returned ; that he was a native of Se-Tchuen and had studied in Japan without going either to America or to Europe. His conversation appeared to signify that the student class, and not the unsteady governments constituted China in his eyes. It was also a revelation of the currents of thought which are agitating Asia to-day. Here in this remote city surrounded by all the perils of civil war, dispossessed, humiliated and hemmed in by soldiery, this young civilian authority confined his conversation with Europeans to the subject of Bolshevism.

This morning, for once, I have seen a happy village. We had not steamed on for more than an hour when we were forced to anchor again owing to the impenetrable mist. The whole population of the village squatted on the bank in pale blue cotton clothes staring at the gunboat. At the top of the bank you could see the houses of the village half-concealed in blankets of mist, some built all of wooden planks like Swiss châlets, the others white, inlaid with dark beams like the houses of Normandy, so that, but for the Chinese roofs of the temple which rose above them you would not have known that you were in China.

I walked up to the village. It was happy and at ease, for the soldiers had decamped during the night, and had not yet been replaced by others. I went into the court of the temple, which was decorated with those little carved panels relieved with gilding, which are to be found in nearly all the temples of the district, and faintly reminded one of the Regency style. At one side of the court there was a sort of storehouse for coffins.

I went up to the first floor into the main hall. There were three horrific statues in garments of gold, blue in the face, like men who are suffocating, and with eyes starting out of their heads. These terrible creatures were bending over the quietest, most ordinary and

neutral blend of still life that I have ever set eyes upon, as if it were their intention to inspire the desks and benches and open books with panic. The class had evidently been interrupted; the master's felt slippers were lying on a chair, an English phrase was scrawled across an exercise book which had been left open. This contrast was very characteristic of a country where creatures from a nightmare perpetually overhang an existence which completely ignores them.

My great pleasure up there was derived from looking out from the gallery on to the little roof of the entrance to the temple which loomed up quite close below me. The mist was clearing away and I feasted my eyes on its globular slopes of a luscious and lustrous yellow. Its ridges and borders seethed with the activity of a fabulous existence. There I saw convulsive dragons, and Genii bestriding monsters, and fish writhing with the terrible power of flames, and between these strange, strange creatures there were little flowers shivering in silence, flowers as modest as the beasts were outrageous. They were little real flowering weeds and climbing plants which had been sown in the crevices by the wind. I imagined myself one of those storied travellers engaged upon one of the voyages of old and disembarked at the foot of a golden hill. But the mist having cleared away altogether, the yellow roof was now no more than an island in the platitude of surrounding Chinese life, over which its mystic spell had no power. But at any rate, though the platitude of daily life was there all right, at least for once it was relieved of the burden of abnormal oppression which seems to hang over it in China.

The absence of soldiers from the streets as I strolled about them, can only be described as delicious. The village people went quietly about their business. They looked at me with apparent friendliness, though their expression never loses a certain craftiness, and I noticed that they generally laughed after I had passed them, though they managed to restrain their mirth while we

were face to face. Or perhaps some child behind me would imitate the bleating of a sheep, a traditional joke, founded on the double meaning of the word *yang*, which means foreigner as well as sheep.

Some filthy beggars were lying on some trusses of straw near a temple with rose-coloured walls, one of them, who got up was clad in such a thickness of rags sewn together that it made him quite a serviceable cloak.

Eatables were set out very tastefully in the front of a restaurant that I passed; white and red vegetables were piled in alternating pyramids, according to colour. Quite close, some heaps of filth were lying in the open.

CHAPTER II

Here we are at Tchong-King. We have passed the colossal Buddha of gilded stone enbowered in trees, who protects navigators. The town lies stretched out before us on a promontory between the river and a wide tributary. It seems sunk into a cup-like hollow, smoking with mists which never become completely dispersed. On the other side of the tributary is a second town, which is only a continuation of the first one. There are no lofty monuments here standing alone. Only the roofs of a few temples stand out between the houses like the horns of a ram among sheep. The only impression you receive from this great huddled heap of houses is that of gazing at the obscure capital of sheer numbers In spite of the vast spreading of the river here the atmosphere gives that cloying effect that you feel in the middle of a continent terribly far from the life-giving salt breezes of the sea.

The gunboat is anchored below the town on the right bank, and at the present moment I am being conveyed in a small boat to Tchong-King. The conflicting currents make a rather difficult job of crossing the Yang-Tse, and when it rises, smaller craft often capsize. All hands on board are done for then, for the strength of the current is irresistible. However, we reached the other bank in safety and landed amongst junks and skiffs and the evolutions of their lean and muscular crews.

There was the town confronting us much nearer now, between the Yang-Tse and the Kia-Liu. In the middle distance the gate of the city opened like an ogre's jaws, at the top of the greyish-yellow slope of the ramparts; and these jaws swallowed up and threw out a constant

stream of Chinamen in blue cotton garments coming up from the river bank or going down to it. There was not one note of vivid colour to relieve this monotony. I was being carried in a chair by this time between files of street vendors with baskets full of fritters and other cooked food. The ogre jaws of the gate swallowed me up with the rest, and the city in which I found myself seemed as far back in time, as it was far from my home in space. Those streets, without any wheeled traffic, take you back to the Middle Ages, and so do the yawning houses which *pour* out children into the streets. In this swarming condition a man counts about equal to a louse.

There is more than distaste, there is a secret humiliation for an Occidental in moving through this indivisible crowd, almost a solid block of human bodies, where he finds the fundamental ideas on which his whole being rests, attacked and thrown down. His very idea of the individual as a brilliant diamond of unity is destroyed. The individual here is only one water-drop merged in the stream. It is not joyous and exuberant numerousness which reigns here, the numbers are burdened with the oppression of their own immensity. They are melancholy. This crowd does not bring animation to any space that it fills. The pedestrians all move at exactly the same pace, so much so that the man who is most pressed for time only looks mildly diligent, while the most genuinely idle passer-by can only just be described as lounging.

Sometimes a chair would pass containing a worthy citizen who looked as if he wished to impress all beholders with his crushing importance, or else, a young man, with the pallor of a Spaniard, his head thrown back, his eyes closed, utterly exhausted, looking as if he were returning from some debauch. A few tiny details give a certain picturesque quality to the scene; for instance, I saw a little vendor with a blowpipe making absurd sugar animals for his confectionery, something like the little monsters which the glass-blowers amuse themselves by producing. Some

ridiculous paper fish hanging at the door of a restaurant had the effect of a rather savourless joke in that heavy atmosphere. Hideous maladies take hold of swarms like these, just like brambles clinging to a wall. One sees swellings, scabs, mottlings and bright rashes. I once saw the dark, purplish turgescence of leprosy on the naked back of a water-carrier running in front of me.

Nothing cheerful stands out in the uniformity of the crowd, but now and then you are suddenly frozen with horror at the poor unbearable face of a beggar, a face contracted like a closed fist, with merely the remnants of eye or lip to be seen in it.

Neither are the shops exciting. In the lower town the dentists and opticians always do good business, for in China it is a sign of high seriousness to be fitted with spectacles or gold fillings in your teeth. The street of the fur merchants is hung with the skins of foxes, of lynx, and of leopard ; there are tiger skins and the lovely furs of the snow leopard, creamy-hued, scattered over with faint grey and fawn spots which melt deliciously into the ground-tint. In the curio shops you only find modern porcelain and faked bronzes from Japan. Only the pharmacies are really sumptuous in all this sordid display. Their lofty wooden *façades* are richly carved and marvellously gilded, often representing some luxuriant thicket where phœnixes lie reposing on beds of flowers. Within the spacious shop there are antlers hanging from the ceiling, and the powders and pills are reverently enshrined in porcelain pots and vases and lacquer boxes.

In the country where the grand affair in hand seems always to be the preservation of one's health at a decent level, these pharmacies are far more than shops, they are temples of egoism, and of the recognised cult of man for his own body. As for the real temples, you notice their courts and flights of steps as you pass along the streets. On the *façades* of the temples you often see a tracing of a circle which is sinuously divided into two equal halves which represent the two eternal principles in opposition

to each other which yet complete each other. They are called *yinn* and *yang*; the former terrestrial, passive feminine, the latter celestial, active and male, the two elements whose reciprocal reactions have produced and maintained the world.

It is well known that this is one of the fundamentals of Chinese cosmogony, but as you come across this divided circle everywhere here, you feel the awakening of some lost consciousness which travelling through China so often arouses in the soul. Then you remember the expressed opinion of old Varron, that the explanation of the difference of sex of the Immortals is to be found in the ancient and received idea that the gods are emanations from heaven and the goddesses emanations from earth.

In the lower part of the town many of the houses are built with the first floor raised on pillars of wood poised more or less perilously on blocks of stone. When the weight is not evenly distributed the whole building collapses, crushing the inhabitants to death. Their bodies are recovered from the ruins, and then the house is rebuilt on exactly the same plan. Sometimes fire breaks out in these serried ranks of houses and strides through them like a terrible and purifying young god, and the sudden glorious spring of flames spreads over all this squalor and decay. Only a little while ago a whole quarter was devoured like that. It is only fair to add that it was not rebuilt in the same fashion, but was planned out with wider streets.

The few Europeans who live permanently at Tchong-King complain bitterly of the damp climate. But perhaps their discomfort is not so much due to the climate as to the fact that they are living in an alien world, shoulder to shoulder with a swarm of human beings who take no thought for them, and really do not seem aware of their existence. The stranger within their gates pines in a captivity which is none the less real for being only imaginary. It would not make so much demand on personal force of character to live in a desert where the

solitude has a grandeur of its own and your liberty is complete, as to live surrounded by a self-sufficing people who can never understand you and whom you can never understand.

Sometimes when you go into a less-frequented street, and are no longer lost in a crowd, you become aware of a sleek, superior, beatific smile spreading and broadening on the faces of all the Chinamen sitting behind their counters on both sides of the street. You know, that in their eyes, you are so covered in ridicule from head to foot that it would be useless to run through different details of your personal appearance to discover which is provoking this sublime disdain. From head to foot, you are a comical and impossible barbarian in Chinese eyes. Many foreigners find this silent hilarity intensely irritating. But feeling that I was a bird of passage I was rather pleased than otherwise to provide enjoyment as a spectacle to a whole nation.

After a long expedition through the city I went back by various winding streets in the upper town, which were already darkening as the twilight fell. Women were still at work, grinding millstones in unlighted rooms. Little girls were playing around me, silently, chasing each other, swooping round in narrow circles like bats. The solemn, luminous flames of oil lamps began to appear in the houses. The clash of cymbals and the shrill chanting of a funeral ceremony came from one house which was closed.

Electric lighting is supposed to be established in Tchong-King, but it is so very poor that you hardly notice it. A miserable reddish gleam at the street corners was all I saw of it.

Joss-sticks of incense, however, were lighted upon every little street-shrine, as well as in the yawning openings of the houses, and their sweet savour went up to the gods merged in that strange combination of indefinable exhalations composing the heavy, insipid atmosphere, which one is obliged to breathe in Chinese cities.

A little later I went out to dinner, carried in a chair again. My four bearers walked along cheerily, laughing together at their own jokes, which, from all accounts, are of the grossest description ; from time to time their guttural cries warned the pedestrians to get out of the way. Another chair was being carried ahead of me and suddenly plunged round a bend into a dark and secret alley, like a gondola slipping into a narrow canal in Venice. We took our way through the same streets that I had explored earlier, but we passed beyond them into a wealthier quarter of private residences. We went past houses all lighted in the same way by a string of white lanterns, which gave out a steady radiance and once, on turning my head, I caught sight of the splendid glossy black surface of lacquer panels inscribed with magnificent characters in gold. Then we reached the ramparts and for some distance I was borne along the top of them behind massive battlements.

Suddenly a torch flared out in leaping tongues of flame at some distance off, but how far the distance was I had no means of judging, and before long a whole convoy of horses led by soldiers brushed past us, as it were, without becoming more distinct in the darkness of the night, for the moon had not yet risen.

But on my return the power which the old town already exercised over me assumed the potency of a charm. The streets were empty. My bearers went along at a good pace. The lower floors of the houses were all fast asleep in shadow, but the upper stories were floating in the pale bluish light of the moon, and it seemed to me like the superposition of dream over sleep. There was nothing to be heard but the vibrating notes of a cricket, notes separated from each other like pearls on a string, and then another cricket would answer from a distance, and so they exchanged their tremulous signals, very tiny watchmen in the enormous world of night. The shadow in the streets was tinged with red from the dying light of the joss-sticks set up before

household gods. A starveling dog slunk along the walls like a shadow. But in a Chinese street there is always someone to be found eating at any hour of the day or night. I saw a soldier buying fritters from a street vendor, and it was upon this last bargain of the night hours that the moon spread her pale magic light.

The French Consulate, where I was most hospitably entertained, dominates a large part of the town and one great bend of the river.

I traced the course of the Yang-Tse at the foot of the mountains on the opposite shore as I stood in the Consulate garden, which is still brilliant with autumn flowers. It was, as it generally is there, a damp and misty day. An island of slime and ooze is beginning to appear in the midst of the water, and it is getting larger every day, and man has already seized upon this patch of earth to demand fruits from it, and to erect his wooden cabins on it. The city rampart runs beside the Consulate garden, and two or three modest kitchen gardens are simply clinging to its slopes. Beyond the ramparts comes the region of tombs. These tombs are scattered over several hills, and it is striking to see the dead usurp so much space from the living in this over-populated country, where every possible square foot of ground is put into cultivation. In the North the tombs take the form of hillocks or burrows grouped in the fields, but here the soil is just slightly raised into a billow, and they are pressed so closely together that they look rather like tiles on a roof.

The light is not transparent to-day, it is obscured by the dampness of the atmosphere and partially veils the landscape. Birds of prey were wheeling slowly over the plain, and every now and then one of them would perch on a stone or a branch with mocking cries.

I have seen soldiers drilling all day on the esplanade at the highest point of the town. Their manner of march-

ing and counter-marching, and right-about-turning (this last movement looked like a pirouette) gave them the look of dancing-masters who, by some fortuitous circumstance, had been armed with rifles. And then they marched at the goose-step, and I cannot tell you what a strange effect it gave to see the slackest army in the whole world imitating the hardest and most rigid army in the whole world.

All this drill went on to the eternal blare of the trumpets, an eternal lament. It is characteristic of China that it should have converted the most cheerful of instruments (which is the spontaneous and naïve expression of action) into a declaration of languor and weariness which you are inclined to interpret as the cry of a nation in search of its own soul. Towards evening I walked up to this square. Through the rich humidity of the air the sunset spread itself above the mountain-tops in a wide band of orange flame, from which again there spouted and surged the torrent of a rose-coloured glory; and between its august rays I saw the pale darts of the evening star pulsating in the upper sky, which was almost apple-green.

Chimneys smoked and trumpets still lamented in a dying wail of sound. Then, as if in contrast, the brazen bell of a temple uttered its low, full note. There was sincerity at least in that voice, which spoke of nothing but lethargy and dream. It came into my mind that if I were to cross those mountains, and others again beyond them, I should be in Thibet, the country one must needs dream of in China, which exercised a fascination over minds and spirits, at least three thousand years ago, when Si-wang, the royal mother of the West held a Chinese Emperor captive to her charms.

To-day, it is the only country left which is not as others are, the only fortress which has not capitulated, a castle whose moats are the dizzy gorges where the great swift rivers flow along the bottom, a castle whose battlements are the giddiest heights in the world. There,

far away, there are young princesses dancing, robed in crimson and yellow brocade, with high red leather boots and leather belts, their sinuous arms weighed down with massive bracelets encrusted with turquoise; there, far away, in the feudal monasteries guarded by the eternal snows the ceremonials of a mysterious and magnificent cult are endlessly performed.

In Thibet everything is praying, from the praying-machines worked by devotees to the very walls covered with mystical inscriptions, to the banners streaming in the wind; and on certain days, from the heights of their monasteries, the Lamas unroll huge pictures of the gods of such stupendous dimensions that there is not a peasant in a distant field, nor a pedestrian toiling along a distant road who does not perceive that "God is not mocked," and seeing, falls down in prayer.

To-night, for my joy and solace, the moon was opulently full, and her magnificent wealth of light revealed all the country round to me. The river winding beneath her seemed as if it could be nothing but a stream of her own light. The sharply outlined mountains were swimming in a transparent milky haze. Even the flowers, in the garden, all round me, seemed to have escaped from their stems and to be exploding like rockets rather than blooming in the strange, all-pervading silver flood of the moonlit atmosphere. I looked up with passionate love at the chosen planet, the lovely feminine sun, who rules over all the poets in Asia, and lashes them to ecstasy.

Then I recollected the story of the Emperor Huan-Tsung of the Tang dynasty. One night when he was admiring the moonlight on his balcony in company with the Patriarch Chen and the Doctor of Reason, Ye Fa-Chan, he was heard to express a wish that he could be transported to the moon. "It can easily be accomplished to-night!" said the Patriarch, and after

having recited some magic invocations he requested the Doctor to throw his stick into the air. It was no sooner done than they beheld an immensely long bridge stretching out before them, and immediately they set out to cross it. After having passed over a strangely long distance in a very few minutes, they came to a towering gateway; they passed through it and found themselves amongst a number of magnificent sparkling palaces which looked as if they were built of ice, and glittered with all the pomp of a splendid frost. They themselves had become icy to suit the atmosphere, and the dew froze on their garments. The façade of the largest palace bore the inscription—"*The Palace of Intense Cold and Sheer Emptiness.*"

The Doctor explained to his companions that it was inhabited by the famous Tchang-ngo, who had stolen the philtre of immortality from her husband, the Emperor Yao, and had then taken refuge in the moon. Two soldiers were on guard before the door, so stiff and frozen to look at that the explorers did not think these guards would oppose their entrance. But when they approached the door the frost-bound soldiers made such a threatening gesture with their lances of ice that the three companions did not budge another step forward. Then thanks to the Patriarch's magical art they were transported to one of the white clouds suspended overhead. There they could look down upon all the life of the palace. They beheld the Immortals paying visits to each other upon clouds harnessed with cranes. The ladies of the moon, dressed in dazzling white, walked exquisitely up and down like peacocks, or danced with a grace so lovely that it gave one a pang, under wide-branching trees white with hoar-frost. Their steps were danced to the measure of a faultless melody, which the Emperor, who was a great lover of music, tried to note securely in his memory.

And then it seemed that the moment had come when they must return to earth. As they were mysteriously

borne over the town of Lou-Tcheou the Doctor saluted the Emperor, and begged him to pause and play an air on his jade flute, and to throw down a golden coin. After that they arrived back at the Imperial Palace. Huan-Tsung could see no sign of the bridge by which he had left his balcony to go to the moon, and thought that he must be recovering from a drunken stupor.

But the next night, when he was again admiring the moon with his two companions on his balcony, he had an irresistible desire to repeat the experience. But the Doctor informed him that the date was no longer a lucky one, and on that night it could not be done, so they had to content themselves with admiring the seductive sphere from below. A week later a report was sent in to the Throne in which the inhabitants of Lou-Tcheou respectfully made known to their Emperor that on the fifteenth night of the eighth month the sounds of ravishing aerial music had been heard in the town, and that the golden coin which they sent with the report, had fallen from the sky.

After that the Emperor could not take his eyes off the moon whenever the sky was clear ; and he spent all his time trying to recollect the rare and faultless melody to which the ladies had danced in the moon. He kept his Master of Music hard at it sitting beside him to note down hastily any scraps of it, that he rescued from his memory, and that is how we came to possess the Chinese melody—"*Song of the Garments of Sleet and the Robes of White Feathers.*"

Soldiers rule over the city, and brigands are the overlords of the country districts. They are just two aspects of the same evil. The havoc wrought by these up-to-date brigands far surpasses the timid and well-regulated exactions of their brethren in olden days. Everything then was carried on with scrupulous care for appearances and with that practical management of every one's

interests that is always to be found deeply ingrained in ancient systems of government. From time to time the Imperial Government would send troops against the brigands. Manœuvres would then take place which were something like the figures in a quadrille. The brigands would retreat as the regulars came on, but as they were in need of ammunition for the continuance of their industry they would dig holes before they retired and leave money in them. The regulars, when they came up, would take out the money and fill up the holes with bullets, and then in their turn, retire. The old-established discipline held sway up to the last days of the Empire.

About fifteen years ago three Europeans were crossing the solitudes of the North of China on horseback. One evening when they were riding through the twilight seeing nothing round them but a succession of bare hills thrown up like frozen waves, they suddenly perceived a rider on the summit of one of them outlined against the pale sky. He plunged downwards into the valley and was succeeded by another rider on the hill-top, who followed the first one's lead, and was succeeded by another and another, and a few minutes later the travellers found themselves surrounded by a silent circle of men on horseback, all of them armed. One of the Europeans instantly put out his hand to his rifle, but another caught him by the arm to prevent it. If he had fired a single shot they would have been lost. Then the prudent traveller spurred forward a little and called out to the foremost horseman. He complained forcibly of this strange manner of surrounding three peaceable travellers, and also of such defiance of the customs of the road. The man made excuses and to explain the fact that he and his company were armed he alleged the presence of brigands in the district. Now these brigands were no other than himself and his followers. He then offered his services to the travellers, and did not leave them until after many protestations the travellers were able to

continue their journey safely, and finally reached their destination without hindrance.

Those days are long past. The brigands to-day know no law but that of their arms, their numbers and the impunity with which they carry out their marauding. They have no scruples about abusing their power, and they forcibly detain Europeans for ransom. The other day a band of two hundred of them swooped down upon a house in the suburbs of a town and sacked it, while no one dared to offer the least resistance.

The city gates are shut every evening at sundown, and thus the cities are protected. But the inhabitants have to bear the burden of the garrison which has been detailed to defend them. It is true that the garrison now consists of troops of Se-Tchuen, and that the streets have been decorated in their honour. But these demonstrations of a joy which is only doubtfully genuine recalls that which is written in the book of Judith concerning Holofernes—"Now such a terror of him weighed upon the provinces that all the dwellers in the cities, the magistrates and persons of the highest rank went before him, like the common people, with garland and with torches, dancing to the sound of drums and flutes. But even in so doing they could not soften the ferocity of his heart."

When the soldiers are empowered to impress forced labourers, they seize any poor men they happen to meet and take them as far as ten days march from home and abandon them there without food or money, when they are done with. So that when these levies are going on you may see the people fleeing from four or five soldiers, and two boatmen recently died in the hospital because they leapt from some high rocks to get away from the pressgang.

This afternoon I saw some men who had just been seized in this fashion. One man was enough to guard the lot, and all their wrists were tied up with the same rope. They did not struggle, they seemed indifferent, and some

of them even laughed, either because they were comforted by their inevitable fatalism, which is natural to them, or because they were ashamed of having been caught, and in this country where the sense of ridicule is shamelessly indulged, they determined to put a good face on the matter, so that they should not be laughed at any more than necessary.

And yet these people are not incapable of making themselves respected. Some years ago there were cities and even townships without walls which had raised a militia strong enough for their own defence. The troops from Yunnan afterwards deprived them of all their arms. But if these were restored there is little doubt that the country folk would make the same efforts to defend themselves against aggression.

In the meantime Tchong-King is in a fairly peaceable condition. But to judge by the reports which come up the river the same cannot be said of other districts. We hear that there has been a battle at Fou-tcheou, that the city has been pillaged, and so has the city of Wan-Shien, where, it is also said, the soldiers massacred a number of children before they fled. No doubt the reports are exaggerated, but you can never be sure that they are altogether false, for it is precisely this power for producing horrors out of apathy, which is one of the principal characteristics of China.

The Chinese soldier, such as you meet everywhere in the street, is not promising to look at. Their valour varies a good deal according to the province, but there is no doubt that some of them, for example the Mongolian, the Manchurian, and the men of Se-Tchuen and Yunnan make excellent soldiers. There is excuse for them if they do not always fight with their utmost ardour, for the motive is entirely lacking in the artificially-promoted wars in which they are almost always engaged. They inevitably contract habits of sparing themselves such as you find among mercenaries. But let them once be set aflame, and they become fanatically indifferent

to danger. Read the records of the campaign of 1860, and those of the battle of Pa Li Kiao, and you cannot fail to realise the admiration of the French officers for the intrepidity of their adversaries. The Europeans at Tchen-Tou got the same impression as they witnessed the assaults of the Chinese troops in the face of machine-gun fire.

The weakness really lies in the Chinese officers, not that excellent specimens have not been trained in Europe, and especially in France, but once returned to China their superiority to their fellows is too markedly evident to be endured. They are hunted out of the service on one pretext or another, by a pack of jealous rivals in cordial agreement on this one point at any rate.

Those officers who reach the highest rank have nearly all had training in Japan. They are less warriors than politicians in command of armies, opportunists who change sides in accordance with their interests, and remain comrades for the most part, even when they play the rôle of adversaries, just as politicians do. It is said, however, that some of them are beginning to consider the status and welfare of the troops, and to recruit officers from the most gallant and intelligent men in the ranks.

The man who is able to form an army which he can really command will have immense power in China, but at the present time there is no sign of the existence of this great personality either among the military commanders or in any other section of society.

Yet behind this veil of soldiers there still exists the old Se-Tchuen where life was sweet once. The servants of a household used to be closely associated with the life of the family, and even nowadays no one is surprised to see them hanging inquisitively round the threshold of a room where their master is entertaining his friends. It is then that they recall those secondary

personages who are always gathered on the outskirts of the same sort of scene in pictures by the Italian Masters, the only difference being in the expression of the faces, for the Chinese faces are always dull and melancholy, and absolute strangers to that smile which is a reflection of the happiness of others. When you do find them enjoying themselves their coarse and sensual hilarity is abundant indication of the only guise in which happiness appears to them, a purely egoistic one.

The patriarchal manner of living which I have just described, is sometimes (with infinite lack of discernment) called democratic. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is precisely in countries where the social landmarks are so well fixed that no one would dream of questioning them that relations between different grades can be so far relaxed that the superior may become familiar and the inferior affectionate. In really democratic countries, on the contrary, everybody goes about perpetually on the defensive, chiefly intent on preventing anyone else from scoring over him, and the whole of life is devoted to the uneasy suspicions of susceptibility on guard, and self-love armed to the teeth in order to give as good as it gets, at the very first hint of aggression. Equality and fraternity know nothing of good-natured intimacies.

The peasantry forms the groundwork of China, but we must add special praise to the peasants of Se-Tchuen to those already bestowed on Chinese peasants as a whole. They may justly be compared to the best and worthiest peasantry of Europe, for here the work of their ancient civilisation seems consummated indeed, and there is not the least trace of awkward rusticity to be discerned in these amiable and hospitable field-labourers. The city dwellers, it is true, are often enervated by excesses. But even if their pleasures originate in grossness they always tend towards secret and more refined sensuality than appears on the surface.

This tendency has elevated Chinese cookery for

instance, to an art ; mysterious, occult and full of cunning it creates an atmosphere of *chiaroscuro* in one's taste, where it raises ghosts of sensations, so weirdly empty of all definition, that they are absolutely indefinable.

Nothing could be less like the frugal, wholesome and absolutely naïve fare of the ancient Greeks at their jovial festivals, when olives, milk, a little wine and a mountain kid seethed with herbs from the same slopes, provided all the good cheer which the guests could desire, and nature untouched by art went straight down their gullets.

There is nothing that a superfine civilisation abhors like nature in the raw. Just as they prefer a narrow, restricted garden where two pebbles, a little water and a dwarf tree compose an idea of the universe for them, to vistas of real landscapes, so you find the Chinese demanding soup that is thick and rather gluey, meat that has been re-cooked with elaborate dressing before they can savour their food, as if many processes were necessary before the material has been sufficiently redeemed from its primitive crudity to satisfy the strange exactions of their palates. Their extenuated sensations expire on the threshold of the mind, where they are prolonged again by evocation. Their hypersensitive tastes reach out to refinements which are really almost imaginary ; they will pay incredible prices for certain teas with an aroma which absolutely ravishes their senses, while we should detect no difference between those teas and others of a much commoner brand.

The great painter, Kou Kai Tcheu, who lived in the fourth century A.D. would take great care not to arrive too quickly at the succulent marrow when he was sucking a piece of sugar-cane. " I introduce myself gradually into the region of delights," he would say. We are nowhere near this slow, gloating appreciation in our bustling pursuit of pleasure. Frequently in our own case the soul has quarrelled with the senses, and we keep them apart, but you will find the Chinese soul cuddled into the very

middle of the Chinese senses, which enfold it, and caress it and cajole it, and it is by sharply diminishing sensation that their souls pass from voluptuous pleasure to beatitude.

Beneath the great peaks of the ideal where great painting always reigns, this subtle materialism nourishes and sustains the arts in China. Our only idea of possessing objects is by looking at them, by using our eyes, the most absent-minded and negligent of the senses. For the Chinese the sense of touch establishes quite a different sort of intimacy between themselves and the objects of their choice. This sense of touch becomes the expert minister of certain mysterious felicities of theirs.

For these felicities were the smooth, globular fruits of jade devised, globes that the hand clings round almost with love, while the smooth hardness almost melts in the surrounding grasp. For these felicities did the potter shape those swelling vases, whose voluminous forms, without flaw or irregularity, are only fully justified by a long, stroking caress.

The dancing girls of India move the muscles of their arms until they look like flowing water, they multiply the fascinations of their bodies by their movements. The Chinese courtesans are motionless as idols. While they sit immovable in the sight of their admirers, there is nothing to attack the men's sensibilities but the biting notes of a little native violin.

China is the country of motionless enjoyment. Everything concurs to fix and petrify the Chinaman in this stupor (where he walls himself up with his joy, guarding it like a miser from the danger of its being diffused) which is enhanced by slow stages from stupor to ecstasy, according to the inner resources of the man in question. Most Europeans descend from dream to pleasure; the Chinese climb up from pleasure to dream. No doubt this rule is not applicable to the whole nation, and many of them are sensual after the fashion of the average sensual man. Nevertheless, whatever you may judge from appearances in the case of a Chinaman

you must know him very well before you decide that he is incapable of superfine points of view. A European who had resided in Se-Tchuen for many years and was as familiar with the life there as a European can be, became quite intimate with a jolly general whom he often met at dinners, a great eater and drinker, brimming over with good spirits which expressed themselves in the coarsest of jokes. His European acquantance made up his mind that the general was a finished example of the most commonplace type of *bon-vivant.* But there came a day when the Chinaman invited the European to visit his garden of chrysanthemums, and there among the glories of the flowers a new man was revealed, an amateur of the rarest and most exquisite taste, who could notice and point out the most ephemeral beauties of those corollas, heavy with their own magnificence.

As for the beliefs current in this district, a peasant of Se-Tchuen if questioned, would answer to the end of his life that he had three religions ; that means that he venerates Confucius, since his is the official religion of the Empire ; that he is a Buddhist as regards the great ceremonies of life, and that he is a Taoist in all that touches the superstitious practices of life. The Chinese admit that they have more than one religion. They would no more shrink from that, than from taking every possible precaution against any obscure risks. This accommodation is all the easier to them because their minds and moral beings have not the rigidity of ours.

The principle of contradiction has no absolute empire over them. However strongly they hold one opinion, that does not prevent them from giving some support to an opposite opinion, and it is this very ubiquity which foreigners often find so disconcerting. It inspires them with mistrust of people who are so difficult to take hold

of that you can never be sure of winning them altogether to your side.

In Pekin, you may find many old Chinamen, considered amongst the wisest of the day, who think that the problem of China will only be solved by the coexistence of an Emperor and a President of the Republic. In their opinion this compromise would permit China to pay homage to a political form which has almost world-wide acceptance, and at the same time would preserve enough of the *ancien régime* to satisfy the demands of tradition which are as active in China to-day as ever they were.

Such a disposition to wed contradictions is only to be explained to most people by a laziness of mind which does not connect principles with their inevitable consequences, but by subtler minds it is better understood, and reveals the compromisers as more apt than we are to envisage two aspects of the same idea, more deft in balancing their merits. And though less logical than we, they are certainly more sage; to put it bluntly, they have minds of greater compass, which can contain more than ours.

The Chinese are often superstitious, and all the more so because they are sceptical. When the ideal elements of religion are lacking to them they play with the obscure forces of devil-worship and spiritualism. Quite recently a general at Tchong-King, a strong-minded man and a great admirer of the Bolshevists, but very uneasy as to his own future, spent a whole afternoon consulting the Fates through the medium of a little girl in his own home where he had taken refuge.

Foreigners who know the Chinese well, assure me that they show keen interest in metaphysical problems, and enter into them with zest amongst those who possess their confidence. We should examine this curiosity to see whether there is not an element of childishness in it. The Chinese are certainly interested in spiritualism, but chiefly because the subject includes investigation into the activities of ghosts and vampires, in which they

take a deep interest. One often hears the Chinese alluded to as prosaic people, but old China stands, counting-machine in hand, in a surrounding framework of fabulous dragons. She buys and sells and bargains, but under the ægis of phœnix and unicorn. She has her fantastic side, but you never find any variation in her phantasies which may be compared to fossilised impressions. The Chinese imagination is no longer capable of bringing these monsters to life. They are still avid of the marvellous but quite passively so, and they are gorged with outrageous tales, though you could never divine it from their phlegmatic exteriors. They may be compared to habitual drunkards who carry their liquor so well that there is no sign of their excesses in their appearance or gait.

If they remain quite unmoved by the supernatural it is not because their disposition is to cast it from them, but because their beings are saturated with the consideration of it. All missionaries will tell you that there is no difficulty in making them receive the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection, but they will not accept it as a proof of His divinity, it is to them only one more marvel among the countless marvels they are familiar with. Such an opinion tells its own tale of their slack conception of the linking up of phenomena. Their minds are not exacting enough to deny the possibility of miracles, but having admitted their possibility, their imaginations are not active enough to take fire from the theme. It is the general torpor of their faculties rather than the methodical exercise of their judgments which has often given them the appearance and the reputation of being an exceedingly reasonable people.

The old province of Se-Tchuen is, however, as profoundly agitated now as the rest of China. There was delirious excitement in Tchen-Tou when the revolution broke out in 1912. Besides the secret societies,

whose hidden movements are often weaving the visible surface of things, other societies were inaugurated to act in the open. There were associations for rousing patriotism, for reforming morals, for opposing the Christian influence, and for supporting Buddhism and Confucianism. There was even a Women's Suffrage Society, and a mystical association called the Blue Lotus, in which young men and maidens vowed themselves to celibacy.

A number of private individuals opened schools with imposing names; a student just returned from Europe inaugurated a course of Esperanto. Acting as pokers to the glowing coals of all these furnaces the newspapers became very officious. It was the *Awakening of the Masses* here, and the *Union of the Hans* there, and feminist journals and many others joined in the fray. Subscriptions in aid of the Republic were organised; statues of Buddha were stolen from the temples, and even from the specially venerated monastery of Mount Omi, to melt down into coinage. There were changes in the fashion of dress, particularly in regard to hats, and the European hats poised on Chinese heads seemed to be in the act of hatching out new ideas.

By a significant reaction which is always seen to recur, at the very moment when the Chinese seem to be really lending themselves to our ideas, their reawakened pride united them against us. They rushed in crowds to a certain theatre to see a piece, in which negroes subjugated by whites, revolted in the end and massacred their oppressors. The army and the police having lost touch with each other there was unlimited disorder, and the whole matter came to a head in riots. But the fermentation has not ceased since then. China, always so proud of being able to swallow up her conquerors is threatened by more dangerous masters now, who have already disturbed her ancient calm. These victors are neither more nor less than ideas, or rather, names and words. A Frenchman who had long resided in the province happened to be staying near Sui-Fou in 1906,

and found himself engaged by the innkeeper in a discussion upon the subject of the famous Man Tou Kie. Great was the Frenchman's enlightenment when he understood that the writer in question was Montesquieu. Rousseau and Comte, not to mention Napoleon and Washington exercise their different curious despotisms over many minds in this country.

Of all these influences, that of Jean Jacques is the least surprising. When an old civilisation is in the act of crumbling we can easily understand that this ardent partisan of disorder can find a part to play in the drama, especially as his principal achievement is to liberate the animal in man, while he justifies the process under cover of a biting logic. But how in the world does the brilliant and sententious author of the *Esprit des Lois* come to influence minds so far removed from his own ? Is it the theory of the three powers which strikes them ? Montesquieu, like Rousseau, has spoken hard words of China. But that does not affect the position. It is only their names which live on and develop an independent existence here, and it would be vain to look for any recognisable influence from their books in the demoniacal uproar which their names arouse in China.

No doubt thought is inevitably transformed as it passes into action, and infidelity to a doctrine begins with the enlistment of the first disciple. At the same time, as long as a doctrine is confined to the regions of its birth, the words which represent it continue their relations with its first origin. But here in an alien world these words break loose from the reality which it was their mission to express, and become an unpublished reality to themselves, and proudly forgetful of their origin they fly through the feverish atmosphere of an alien world on wings like a griffin's.

They keep their intellectual *prestige* for the subjugation of this new world, but the truth is that they take new life from the dreams, passions and ambitions of their new votaries, and derive from them a strange

new vigour and brilliancy. In this fruitful denaturalisation of doctrines, this ill-regulated epopee of ideas, in this avatar of mere names there is something fantastic which takes possession of the mind. You feel that you are in the presence of one of the strongest forces in history, but of that whose action is one of the most difficult of all to measure and define, because it concerns the immensity of the rôle which human folly plays in human affairs.

The French flag floats over a group of buildings in the lower town at Tchong-King; it is a hospital run by the Franciscan missionaries of Mary, and directed by a French doctor. I went to see it this morning. Nuns were going peacefully about their business in the wards dressed in creamy-white habits which had a generally soothing effect.

The patients, who were nearly all treated gratuitously, take advantage of the foreigner's science and charity without a sign of gratitude, very much as the parched earth receives a downfall of blessed rain. There are soldiers from Yunnan amongst the patients from the city, who took refuge there when wounded or ill, and seem very unwilling to be discharged when they are cured, for those of their number who have left the hospital have never been seen again, and have probably had their throats cut in some retired corner by soldiers of the enemy camp.

Nuns of the same order keep a hospital at Sui-Fou, another at Tchen-Tou, another at Tatsien-Lou on the borders of Thibet, and there are white men over the frontier of Thibet even, French missionaries planted out on those mountain-sides where a furious wind rages all the year round, and it seems to me that they are symbols of the supreme qualities of our race.

France is very well thought of in Se-Tchuen, and if the day ever comes when its mines and its undeveloped wealth can be made to pay, Frenchmen will be very

welcome in the province. This good opinion of our country is of course derived from the quality of the Frenchmen that the Chinese meet here. I will not return to the subject of the missionaries, but with regard to the naval officers of the French gunboats on service here, I can and will say that besides the general characteristics which make of them the salt of the earth, they have always shown the keenest and most intelligent interest in the world around them in any part of the earth.

Then our consuls are far from being the sluggish functionaries that they are sometimes depicted; they have counted, and still count, among specialists in race observation, of the first order. But still more has been done for the renown of France by two or three military and naval doctors established in provinces where they have resided for years.

The importance of the doctor may become quite outstanding in China. He is the only European whom the Chinese really need. The merchants come for gain, the consuls necessarily represent the interests of other countries, the missionaries are continually contending with the cold disdain of the upper classes. Only the doctors can go everywhere and find themselves welcome everywhere, even amongst the most inaccessible families, and in a country where nothing can be done except through personal acquaintance and friendship one can understand how intensely important the relation ships between Chinese patients and European doctors may become.

Those doctors whom the French Governement have sent to Tchen-Tou have been awarded professorships there, a position which adds to their authority in proportion to the way in which they fill it.

The Chinese have one great quality, natural to the inheritors of an ancient civilisation, they can judge men and estimate their real worth. They never give their confidence to the superficial, and once their confidence is given it is never withdrawn.

The French doctor who has perhaps had the most success in the provinces told me that at first his pupils would lay snares for him with the intention of exposing him if he really was not up to the standard that he claimed for himself. For instance, they would substitute animal tissue for human tissue, in an experiment during the course on human tissue, to see whether he noticed the difference. But when he had triumphed over all these crafty tests, as he is a man as remarkable for his moral qualities as for his professional capacity, and has given himself up unreservedly to the new world in which he lives, he made such a reputation all over China that when he arrives in a remote village even the peasant inhabitants have heard of him.

There are others following in his footsteps, and a notable example is the young doctor who showed me round the hospital this morning, who is exercising all his great qualities as a man and a doctor at his post here.

These are facts which show us how France has secured her position in China and how she may maintain it. France has no chance to-day of rivalling the other nations financially in China, the ostentation of America especially leaves France far behind, but she can dispute the first place with all the nations by her choice of her representatives in China. She has men at her command far more fitted to deal with the Chinese than any other nation. There are real affinities between the French and Chinese nations in spite of the many glaring contrasts. The two nations are both founded on agriculture; they have the same respect for courtesy; the same refinement of feeling, especially in *finesse* of taste in art; the same aversion to blatant charlatanism.

The Chinese are resigned now to the opening of schools and laboratories by Europeans, but they make it obvious that these gifts weigh on them a little. Even if they were able to provide the necessary material they would be obliged to resort to long study with foreign professors before they could provide these institutions themselves.

But they never *welcome* any European who has not deserved and obtained their confidence. Let us see to it that they choose Frenchmen. It depends entirely on ourselves.

This morning I was carried in a chair to visit the College of the Marists a little way out of the town. It was fine but misty. We followed the narrow, paved roadway, which rises and falls, uphill and then downhill, with tombs on each side of the way. The ground is thick with tombs, and only occasionally a house appears stuck in between them, pushing them out of the way as it were. At last we came to the fields. The land was cut up into such very small holdings that the landscape seems to be broken into little bits, amongst which the pools of water in the rice-fields at the bottom of the valleys may be compared to fragments of a mirror. The hills were mere clods of soil, the cypresses plunged their tapering points into the luminous gold of the sky, and here and there a willow cast out its slender branches, as a fisherman's line is cast.

The whole country-side was impregnated with the effort of the living and the substance of the dead. There was no getting away from humanity in this landscape, humanity is clinging to the soil.

It is not Virgil's agriculture on the grand scale with its wells, and beehives and vast stretches of country, where the lowing of cattle is heard like some serene thunder from afar. Man's labour here is more assiduous and obstinate and in every way more restricted. It is prose not poetry.

I arrived at the college and was welcomed by the three Marist Brothers, who have about sixty pupils under their charge, of whom two-thirds are Christians. They have the rather wan, faded appearance common to nearly all Europeans transplanted to this country where there is nothing which is natural sustenance to them, either

moral or physical. Their priest's bands, their little pointed beards and the serious, chagrined expression of their faces gave them a look of the period of Louis XIII.

They talked to me about their efforts simply, honestly, truly, and without illusions. Their pupils mostly come from the lower middle classes. They try to awaken their souls and to stimulate their intelligence. And then they have to pay strict attention to the prejudices of the country; for instance, they must not dream of giving their pupils exercise-books which can be carried home, for if the parents discovered that their children were not among the highest in the class they would withdraw them from the college in the bitterest mortification. The Brothers are teaching their pupils French, and they are all the more deserving of praise for their persistence in it, because as they cannot demonstrate any obvious utility to the pupils in knowing French in this quarter of the world, they have great difficulty in persuading them that there will be any advantage in their studying it. They also run a printing-press, but with more and more difficulty every day, for hand labour becomes more unobtainable every day.

And the brigands become more threatening every day, though so far the college has not actually suffered from their attentions. Whilst I was thinking over all this mass of painful effort which so few people in the world have ever heard of even, we were strolling up and down in front of the college. Beneath us, at the bottom of a long steep slope flowed the muddy stream of the Kia-Liu. In the distance Tchong-King seemed like an army of houses huddled together, veiled by columns of smoke rising up from its chimneys.

CHAPTER III

I AM on my way down the river again. I started this morning on the last boat—an English one—which will go down before the low tides cut off communication for the winter. The weather is overcast, with a greyish-yellow sky. As we left Tchong-King I gazed at the multitude of low, brownish houses, at the arch of the solid city gate and the ramparts where people seemed to be sliding down the slopes like drops of water. Smoking with mist, the river rushed on its way in eddying currents ; boats with standing boatmen passed as silhouettes varying in depth of tone according to the distance, like pictures washed in with different strengths of inks, and though this ancient city, teeming with human beings did not make one friendly sign of farewell to me, it subjugated me for the last time by its mysterious, Babylonish ascendency.

As I went down the river through Se-Tchuen, the land of the great Chinese poets, I turned to them for their version of the soul of China as if ill-satisfied with the knowledge that my own observation had brought me. In China, as elsewhere, poetry was originally a matter of ritual. The strophes collated by Confucius, which a whole race of commentators have endeavoured to invest with an allegorical and political meaning, are nothing but couplets exchanged between young men and maidens, at the festivals which celebrated the solemn occasions of the agricultural year. And yet an exquisite poetry existed in China three centuries before the Christian era. But the finest epoch of the Chinese poets is from

the eighth to the tenth century A.D., during the dynasty of the Tangs and that of the Sungs which followed it.

Chinese poetry is extremely literary. The poems echo each other from century to century. Each one refers itself back to the authority of an earlier one, so to speak, and far from revealing himself with the pride of a creator, the poet presents himself with the modesty of a disciple who is gaining entrance to a society of the *élite*, on the strength of his productions. This group of the elect has included the most prominent personages of the empire and most of the great dignatories ; men, who, to quote St Evremonde, speaking of certain Romans, " did not sink the man in the magistrate."

We can hardly form any idea of this wide and liberal independence, from the paltry distribution of rôles in the modern world. Whether the occupation be great or small, we shall all be merely employed persons and nothing more, before long. The scholar is too much immersed in his own studies to keep abreast of the times or of the general points of view. The functionary is tied to his function. The poet is solely a man of letters. The result is that man as a whole is disappearing, and we are surrounded by fragments of what a whole man should be. These great Chinamen on the contrary were governors, administrators and servants of the throne. But they never became dupes of their fortunes, or credulous victims of their misfortunes. They found resources in themselves in retirement or disfavour. They were poets, less by the possession of a special gift than by the elevated character of their souls and the greatness of their achievements. Into action and business they carried the scruples, the dreams, the refinements of men of intellect. But while they maintained the habit of retiring into themselves they were none the less able to lose the particular in the universal, and on retiring from buiness or from court they sought refreshment in nature, admiring the colours of autumn while they breathed the cool evening air with relief.

The modern man would be seized with real despair if he had the slightest idea of the completeness of his separation from nature.

There has never been a prisoner more closely shackled than the prisoner of the office and the factory. The beautiful days of the outdoor world pass by and he knows nothing of them. Their joy is lost to him. For him they exist in vain. In vain do the sceptres of the moon-rays touch the gloomy brow of the sedentary worker, hastening to his home at night. The modern man is not only less joyous, he is more brutal than his forebears. Consider the insinuating delicacy of ceremonial with which the Japanese used to usher in the seasons, and the unremitting attention and tenderness to the humblest form of plant which you see in Japan to this day; and then, I ask you to watch the hordes of obscure people who pour out of European towns on Sundays into the fields and woods in the lovely month of May. These creatures cannot gather a flower without wounding the whole plant, and when they return to their dens in the evening, they leave the Spring behind them, murdered, pillaged and sacked by ruffians.

Those, who in our countries, still keep the closest familiarity with Nature are the sportsmen, but though they study her mysteries, it is only with a view to destruction. Most of our writers make Nature unrecognisable by the drapery of their adjectives. There are, however, certain old professors in our country who resemble the Chinese men of letters. As they have always loved and composed Latin verse, they have become attached to the subjects of their masters, and through the mediation of Virgil they still treat of willows, and beehives and fountains. But these men are dying out, and those erudite persons who remain to us are captives to their books. They cannot really see anything but print. Having no leisure, and being forced by small means to live in a small way, they are cut off from all delights of the senses, even the most innocent, and they know as

little of the flowers of spring as of the lips of courtesans.

In China, on the contrary, all intellectuals, from the humblest of students to the greatest of scholars, take pleasure in keeping a little flowering plant always upon their desks, and to them it is a symbol of the universe. The sages here are not obliged to emerge from their real selves in order to spread out into the lives of others. In Europe, intellectuals shut themselves apart, in Asia they mingle in the crowd ; and surely this must mean that the general receptivity of the crowd in Asia is superior to that of Europe. Whether Buddhist or Taoist, the ancient poets of China felt themselves woven into the web of universal appearances, and everything that they see is a continuation of themselves ; the bird perched on a roof, the willow branch which droops so ineffably through the motionless air, are not really exterior to, or separate from the poet's being.

Let us reflect upon the singular charm and rare savour which we should discover in the poems of scholars, ambassadors and Ministers of State in our own countries, if they were to preserve enough loftiness of character to dominate their intricate knowledge of the world, and enough indulgence for the beautiful simplicities of nature in hearts necessarily somewhat jaded from the stress of full human lives. Of such a nature are the poems of China. Nature is reflected in the thought. Like paintings they are less intended to afford an actual representation of things than a happy suggestion. With a few touches, a few words chosen with indescribably scrupulous and exquisite care these artists of China can stir us at the heart's core. Entirely lacking the magnificent superabundance of the Hindu poets, or the miraculous lyrical gift of the Persians, Chinese poets use a conciseness which rivals Horace. They are not so brisk as Horace, and though these poems are often as brief as the epigrams of the Anthology, there is absolutely no laughter in them. They are poems of experience, and they express

what they do *not* say with as much significant discretion as a sigh.

The men who wrote them were entirely stripped of illusion. Women, considered only as dancer or musician, are relegated to the position of inferior, though delicate, instruments of pleasure or dream. Like the Ancients the Chinese poets find their consolation in friendship, which is the last barrier between themselves and solitude. An exquisite restraint rules over their verses, and the words that they use, far from exaggerating, always maintain a lower key than the thoughts which they suggest. And, above all, you are made to feel in their poems the tacit melancholy of sages, that discreet weariness of existence, beyond which there is nothing any more.

Certain of these poets have sung the glories of intoxication. It is a favourite theme of the great *virtuoso* Li Tai Pe. But it would be a great mistake to regard him as a common drunkard. For him, intoxication is the daring sister of dream, the symbol of the dismissal of reality which some gifted beings may haughtily dispense with, and his eulogies of the Vine very often bear a mystical significance like those of Omar Khayyám. Moreover, Li Tai Pe was a slave to the magic of the moon, and had he really been given up to habitual debauchery he could not have loved the empress of dreams so faithfully. The story of the manner of his death is well known. Summoned to the Presence of the Emperor, he was going up to the capital one evening by boat in a state of mild intoxication when he was seized with a desire to kiss the reflection of the moon in the river. He lost his balance, and was drowned. A happy end that! To sink body and soul into the reflection of one's dream!

He belonged to a princely family. Like all great artists he was untamably an individual and would suffer no restrictions in the expression of his nature. As he always had a poem in process of formation in his brain

his demeanour was invariably absent-minded, and he paid little attention to etiquette which he utterly despised. He had founded an academy of eight hard-drinking poets, and called them the Eight Immortals of the Bottle.

The Emperor, who could recognise genius, was enchanted with his, and as a mark of his favour had given the poet a complete set of his clothes. Li Tai Pe used to wear them in the taverns that he frequented and his companions would do him homage by presenting wine-cups, a burlesque imitation of the tributes which the ambassadors rendered to the Son of Heaven.

The great Tou-Fou also claimed all the liberty of genius. He slipped out of the necessity of occupying any formal position, and declined every species of regular occupation. Once he was appointed governor of a town, but on the day when he was to assume the burden of office in the presence of all the magistrates, he removed all the insignia from his person, and with a low bow walked out of the Council Chamber and never set foot in it again. He escaped into the heart of the mountains where he lived, among wood-cutters, the wretched existence of a radiantly happy vagabond. However, he was not left in peace. Respectful pursuers tracked him down, and when found, he had no other defence than to deny that he was himself. At last, however, a wealthy and scholarly mandarin of great magnificence persuaded the poet to reside in his house. Honours he managed to elude, but he could not escape the noose of friendship!

The learned Po Chü-i on the contrary accommodated himself marvellously to the claims of official life. There was no more successful and weighty magistrate in the land. But he had made himself a garden, and there refreshed his soul in company with his friends. When he died, the Emperor had his verses engraved upon his tombstone, and the copyright was an excessively costly one. When a caravan of strangers from other districts departed from the city they were not satisfied to be carrying off bales of the most lustrous silks and chests of the

rarest teas, but to complete their satisfaction they must have included some poem or poems by Po Chü-i in their baggage.

There were other poets who retired altogether from the world. Some entered the priesthood, and generally lost themselves in excessive humility. By dint of calling themselves "the man who is nothing," "the man of sheer nullity," "the man who is denuded of all talent," they managed to lose nearly all sense of their identities, and to confound themselves with the universe to such an extent that they felt themselves one with the mountains and the clouds. But all that is past and gone down with worlds that crumbled and were swallowed up long ago, and these men only live momentarily in the mind of a passing barbarian like myself. But how much nobility and refinement has gone down with them!

The Emperor would pardon Li Tai Pe all his pranks, and even his conspiracies. Another poet was allowed such freedom of speech at Court that at last it made a scandal among the courtiers, who appealed to their Sovereign on the subject. The Emperor made excuses for the culprit, and answered somewhat in the manner of that Pope of the Renaissance who said that men, unique in their art, are not as other men, and need not be subjected to the same rules as the majority. I very much doubt whether we are able to estimate and appreciate men with the same justice and generosity to-day.

I want to quote some of these poems. But let me warn the reader against expecting too much. Let him reflect on the immensity of the journey which the poem has had to make before it reaches him. When they set out they were loaded with beauties and rarities innumerable, like the magnificent caravans which were sent forth by the kings of old to brother princes whom they only knew of by hearsay. But those caravans had to dare a thousand dangers, they were held up for ransom by brigands, they had to ford rivers and struggle over the steepest mountain

ranges ; they were robbed of half their riches on the road. In the same way the poem has been obliged to travel across the desert of centuries, and to purchase its passage from one world to another by the sacrifice of practically all its treasures. By the time it reaches us only a few scattered gems remain out of all its riches. Enough survives to give us the essence of this soul from afar.

Here is an anonymous poem of the first century B.C :—

OLD AND NEW

She went up the mountains to pluck wild herbs ;
She came down the mountain and met her former husband.
She knelt down and asked her former husband
" What do you find your new wife like ? "
" My new wife although her talk is clever,
Cannot charm me as my old wife could.
In beauty of face there is not much to choose,
But in usefulness they are not at all alike.
My new wife comes in from the road to meet me ;
My old wife always came down from her tower.
My new wife is clever at embroidering silk ;
My old wife was good at plain sewing.
Of silk embroidery one can do an inch a day ;
Of plain sewing, more than five feet.
Putting her silks by the side of your sewing,
I see that the new will not compare with the old."

The following poems are all by Po Chü-i who lived under the Tang Dynasty from 772-846 A.D.

MY SERVANT WAKES ME

(A.D. 839)

My servant wakes me : " Master, it is broad day.
Rise from bed ; I bring you bowl and comb.
Winter comes and the morning air is chill ;
To-day your Honour must not venture abroad."
When I stay at home, no one comes to call ;
What must I do with the long idle hours ?
Setting my chair where a faint sunshine falls,
I have warmed wine and opened my poetry books.

WATCHING THE REAPERS

(A.D. 806)

Tillers of the soil have few idle months;
In the fifth month their toil is double-fold.
A south wind visits the fields at night:
Suddenly the hill is covered with yellow corn.
Wives and daughters shoulder baskets of rice;
Youths and boys carry the flasks of wine.
Following after they bring a wage of meat
To the strong reapers toiling on the southern hill,
Whose feet are burned by the hot earth they tread,
Whose backs are scorched by flames of the shining sky.
Tired they toil caring nothing for the heat,
Grudging the shortness of the long summer day.
A poor woman follows at the reapers' side
With an infant child carried close at her breast.
With her right hand she gleans the fallen grain;
On her left arm a broken basket hangs.
And I to-day . . . by virtue of what right
Have I never once tended field or tree?
My government pay is three hundred tons;
At the year's end I have still grain in hand.
Thinking of this, secretly I grew ashamed;
And all day the thought lingered in my head.

DREAMING THAT I WENT WITH LI AND YÜ TO VISIT YÜAN CHEN

(Written in exile)

At night I dreamt that I was back in Ch'ang-an;
I saw again the faces of old friends.
And in my dreams, under an April sky,
They led me by the hand to wander in the spring winds.
Together we came to the village of Peace and Quiet;
We stopped our horses at the gate of Yüan Chēn.
Yüan Chēn was sitting all alone;
When he saw me coming, a smile came to his face.
He pointed back at the flowers in the western court;
Then opened wine in the northern summer house.
He seemed to be saying that neither of us had changed;
He seemed to be regretting that joy will not stay;

That our souls had met only for a little while,
To part again with hardly time for greeting.
I woke up and thought him still at my side;
I put out my hand; there was nothing there at all.

SICK LEAVE

(While Secretary to the Deputy-Assistant-Magistrate of Chou-chih, near Ch'ang-an in A.D. 806)

Propped on pillows, not attending to business;
For two days I've lain behind locked doors.
I begin to think that those who hold office
Get no rest, except by falling ill!
For restful thoughts one does not need space;
The room where I lie is ten foot square.
By the western eaves, above the bamboo-twigs,
From my couch I see the White Mountain rise.
But the clouds that hover on its far-distant peak
Bring shame to a face that is buried in the World's dust.

WRITTEN WHEN GOVERNOR OF SOOCHOW

(A.D. 825)

A Government building not my own home.
A Government garden, not my own trees.
But at Lo-yang I have a small house,
And on Wei River I have built a thatched hut.
I am free from the ties of marrying and giving in marriage;
If I choose to retire I have somewhere to end my days.
And though I have lingered long beyond my time,
To retire now would be better than not at all!

GOOD-BYE TO THE PEOPLE OF HANGCHOW

(A.D. 824)

Elders and officers line the returning road;
Wine and soup load the parting table.
I have not ruled you with the wisdom of Shao Kung;[1]
What is the reason your tears should fall so fast?

[1] A legendary ruler who dispensed justice sitting under a wild pear-tree.

My taxes were heavy, though many of the people were poor;
The farmers were hungry, for often their fields were dry.
All I did was to dam the water of the lake[1]
And help a little in a year when things were bad.

ILLNESS AND IDLENESS

(*c.* 812)

Illness and idleness give me much leisure.
What can I do with my leisure, when it comes?
I cannot bring myself to discard inkstone and brush;
Now and then I make a new poem.
When the poem is made, it is slight and flavourless,
A thing of derision to almost everyone.
Superior people will be pained at the flatness of the metre;
Common people will hate the plainness of the words.
I sing it to myself then stop and think about it . . .

. . . . .

The Prefects of Soochow and P'eng-tsē[2]
Would perhaps have praised it, but they died long ago.
Who else would care to hear it?
No one to-day, except Yüan Chēn,
And *he* is banished to the City of Chiang-ling.
For three years an usher in the Penal Court.
Parted from me by three thousand leagues,
He will never know even that the poem was made.

HEARING THE EARLY ORIOLE

(Written in exile)

When the sun rose I was still lying in bed;
An early oriole sang on the roof of my house.
For a moment I thought of the Royal Park at dawn
When the Birds of Spring greeted their Lord from his trees.
I remembered the days when I served before the Throne
Pencil in hand, on duty at the Ch'ēng-ming;[3]

[1] Po Chü-i built the dam on the Western Lake which is still known as "Po's Dam."
[2] Wei Ying-Wu, eighth century, A.D., and T'ao Ch'ien, A.D. 365-427.
[3] Name of a palace at Ch'ang-an.

At the height of spring when I paused an instant from work,
Morning and evening, was *this* the voice I heard ?
Now in my exile the oriole sings again
In the dreary stillness of Hsün-yang town . . .
The bird's note cannot really have changed ;
All the difference lies in the listener's heart.
If he could but forget that he lives at the world's end,
The bird would sing as it sang in the Palace of old.

SONG OF PAST FEELINGS

(With preface)

(*c.* 840)

When[1] Lo-t'ien was old, he fell ill of a palsy. So he made a list of his possessions and examined his expenses, that he might reject whatever had become superfluous. He had in his employ a girl about twenty years old called Fan Su, whose postures delighted him when she sang and danced. But above all she excelled in singing the "Willow Branch," so that many called her by the name of this song, and she was well known by this name in the town of Lo-Yang. But she was on the list of unnecessary expenses and was to be sent away. He had, too, a white horse with a black mane, sturdy and sure-footed, which he had ridden for many years. It stood on the list of things which could be dispensed with and was to be sold. When the groom led the horse through the gate, it tossed its head and looked back neighing once with a sound in its voice that seemed to say : "I know I am leaving you and long to stay." Su, when she heard the horse neigh, rose timidly, bowed before me and spoke sweetly as shall hereafter be shown. When she had done speaking, her tears fell.

When first I heard Su's words I was too sad to speak and could not answer her. But in a little while I ordered the bridle to be turned and the sleeve reversed.[2] Then I gave her wine and drank a cup myself, and in my happiness sang a few score notes. And these notes turned into

[1] *I.e.*, Po Chü-i himself.
[2] *I.e.*, Su to be led back.

a poem, a poem without fixed measure, for the measure followed my irregular tune. In all, there were 255 words. Alas! I am no Sage. I could neither forget past feelings nor show such sensibility as this beast reputed incapable of feeling! Things that happen lay hold of my heart, and when my heart is moved I cannot control it. Therefore, smiling at myself, I called this song "A Song of Past Feelings Unforgotten."

The song says:

I was selling my white horse
And sending Willow Branch away.
She covered her dark eyebrows;
He trailed his golden halter.
The horse for want of speech,
Neighed long and turned his head;
And Willow Branch, twice bowing,
Knelt long and spoke to me:
"Master, you have ridden this horse five years,
One thousand, eight hundred days;
Meekly he has borne the bit,
Without shying, without bolting.
And I have served you for ten years,
Three thousand six hundred days;
Patient carrier of towel and comb,[1]
Without complaint, without loss.
And now though my shape is lowly
I am still fresh and strong.
And the colt is still in his prime,
Without lameness or fault.
Why should you not use the colt's strength
To replace your sick legs?
Why should you not use my song to gladden your casual cup?
Need you in one morning send both away,
Send them away never to return?
This is what Su would say to you before she goes,
And this is what your horse meant also
When he neighed at the gate.
Seeing my distress, who am a woman
And hearing its cries, that is but a horse,
Shall our master alone remain pitiless?"

[1] *I.e.*, performing the functions of a wife.

I looked up and sighed: I looked down and laughed. Then I said:

"Dear horse, stop your sad cries!
Sweet Su dry your bitter tears!
For *you* shall go back to your stall;
And *you* to the women's room.
For though I am ill indeed,
And though my years are at their close,
The doom of Hsiang Chi [1] has not befallen me yet.
Must I in a single day
Lose the horse I rode and the lady I loved?
Su, O Su!
Sing once again the Song of the Willow Branch!
And I will pour you wine in that golden cup,
And take you with me to the Land of Drunkenness."

While I thus enjoyed this ideal society, the most exquisite element of the soul of China, I had an opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with the great river and all its power and melancholy. Grey weather reigned over the deserted waters. On one morning only I saw a flotilla of junks ahead of us. We caught them up and soon passed them. They were full of soldiers, whose dull faces were to be seen framed by the cabin windows in the stern, while on the fore-part of each vessel a cluster of oarsmen bent over their huge oars and emitted a weird cry at regular intervals, as an incentive to their rhythmic exertions. These junks were all elaborately dressed with flags which the wind smacked noisily about in the grey atmosphere. There were red and green lace-edged pennants, which looked like swiftly-darting tongues, and great orange banners closely covered with velvety-black Chinese characters. Really, the whole scene was a picture from another world and another epoch: banners, listless soldiers, galley-slaves, and this silent voyage between the steep mournful banks of the great river in vessels of antique design.

[1] Who, surrounded at the Battle of Kai-hsia (202 B.C.), gave his horse to a boatman, lest it should fall into the hands of the enemy.

The river seems quite familiar to me this time. I can almost recognise the rapids as we come to them in turn, still boiling in raging eddies, still clawing at the long-suffering rocks which confine them. Every evening we anchor for the night. Sometimes one solitary house is the only sign of habitation above us on the bank, a house still gleaming white in the fading daylight, which, under the descending weight of the dusk, might almost be said to remind one of a wood-cutter bending under an enormous load of dark brushwood on his back.

We moored to-night beneath a bank where a whole muddled townlet was spread along the slope beneath the pale, dizzy spaces of the evening sky. The last colours of day were fading into this wan pallor. It is at such a moment that the traveller's reverie expands beyond all limits, and as its source is to be traced to the buried centuries of long ago, and yet it includes this ending of an ordinary day in the present, his dream embraces both the dramatic crumbling of empires and the unknown destinies of the humble of the earth. As long as we remain prisoned in our own particular plot of personal existence, everything conspires (especially our daily cares) to preserve us from these bouts of inexplicable but satisfying melancholy when the ego is able to conceive within its own confines of the vast spaces of the universe. These moods constitute one of the most powerful and most jealously guarded fascinations of travel. And it was in the course of one of these reveries that a last poem came to my mind and I murmured it to myself in the falling twilight. I called it *The Solitary Traveller.*

The rook's powerful wing strikes the lifeless air with the blow of a mattock. On the slope above, the blurred houses seem one with the soil. One temple roof only is higher than the rest. It stands out against the sky. And you, why are you sad?

Is it because you are not great and wise enough to feel the strength of your poor desires always within you? Is it because you are not like those fishermen who never tire of casting their nets, though all the

great wealth of the seas yields them no more than a few pale, quivering fishes?

Is it because you regret those artless days when you knew desire, and now alone, utterly detached, like a tree without roots, do you shiver suddenly because too much wisdom has come to you?

Ah! do not tell your sorrow! It is enough to admit that the shadows are stealing down about you and that like the last glance of the dying, the light is withdrawn from the face of the waters.

CHAPTER IV

It is over. The fierce reaches of the river are behind me. The banks are getting lower, the horizon is extending every day, and here we are again at I-Tchang, and down river the great plain is stretching interminably into the distance, drowned in the blaze of the sun. The atmosphere is marvellously clear. It is one of those days of autumn ecstasy, those days of crisp, light air, pale colour and vast distances clearly defined, and the whole landscape seems to hang from the azure, upon the distant mountains which taper mysteriously into the ether.

In the long main street where a magnificent heap of fish recalls Flemish pictures, the colourless tide of the people flows along under the jut of the roofs which stand out like the prows of ships, and this stream so close to the flow of the Yang-Tse, is like a twin river, it is just as wan, just as full a tide, and just as opaque, as the real river.

When evening had fallen I went for a walk outside the ramparts, between the stalls set up in the open air there. There was a magnificent display of stars on high which could not fail to excite a sense of the enhanced value of life in face of such glory, and amongst them hung the golden crescent of the new moon, the one slender slip, which was visible to us, of the moon's obscured globe. Beneath this celestial magnificence the people of earth were given up to trifling. There were the usual fortune-tellers behind their lamplit tables, some of them old and others mere youths, but the latter were provided with such imposing spectacles, and affected so magisterial a mien that they succeeded in triumphing over their immaturity. Now and then some poor fellow would

detach himself from the crowd and go to consult the oracle. Then the magican would draw a sheet towards him which was already marked with characters. These he would underline and join together with red ink, hoarsely pronouncing a running commentary with a very portentous air as he worked. Though his face remained immovably serious he must from time to time have dropped a witty remark, as all the spectators who gather round the anxious subject of the horoscope would burst out laughing, and the rather cruel expression of mockery which appeared on their faces then, is the only one which ever varies the monotonous indifference of an average Chinese face.

On a piece of waste ground further off I saw a hedge of rose-coloured lanterns. As I went nearer I came to a little wooden house where the open door made a framework to the scene which was being enacted within the house; they were celebrating a funeral ceremonial. Large placards, covered with characters, were hung on the walls, with little lamps burning before them, and I saw the backs of Taoist priests who were performing the ritual of purifying the dwelling. They wore blue robes and high black caps, all except the high priest, who had a rose-coloured garment over the blue, stamped with a pattern of serpentine black lines. He bowed himself and straightened himself many times. Sometimes I heard the chanting of a single voice, sometimes the choir joined in with an accompaniment of muffled knocks and strange, strident noises. Outside, the children of the house were playing rather noisily in the darkness. One member of the family crossing the framed space of the doorway bent to light his water-pipe at one of the sacred lamps, then went out with hardly a word of reproof to the noisy children, and as a cake vendor was passing he took the opportunity of buying some fritters. He munched them with calm enjoyment in the open, just as the ceremonial reached its climax. Voices became intolerably shrill, the irritating music worked up to violent

excitement inside the house. The high priest whose face I now saw at last, began to brandish a magic sword which he pointed into the four corners of the room.

All this, I watched from my vantage ground in the shadow of the cool night, under the blazing stars. There are soldiers lounging all over this town, just as there are in every other, and their presence is not a menace to the Chinese only. When, the other day, the troops from Yunnan cleared out of Tchong-King, they were exceedingly unwilling to leave European property unmolested, and several of the marauders did not scruple to announce that next time they would go for the foreign devils' property first of all. There was more than bravado in this declaration, and in the reign of anarchy which is spreading everywhere in China, the property of foreigners must sooner or later be attacked, and when that day comes, their lives will not be safe either.

I must not omit a reference here to another subject which adds a thrill and a poetical element to the traffic of the great river, I mean the contraband opium trade which is an immensely flourishing industry. The use of opium was prohibited when the Empire came to an end by a combination of measures which were so well conceived and graduated, and so resolutely applied, that the number of regular opium smokers had greatly diminished when the revolution broke out. The number has increased again, thanks to the disorder of general affairs. It must not be imagined that the cultivation of the poppy (which is chiefly carried out in Se-Tchuen) is not still prohibited. But this prohibition is not so much intended to prevent the growing of the poppy as to tax it so heavily that it has become a source of revenue not to be dispensed with. The procedure is simple. When the poppies come up, the mandarin makes a tour of the district and the peasant is fined at a rate of five to ten *cash* per square foot. Before the harvest he has to pay another fine, and in spite of these impositions he makes his opium-growing pay.

Then begins the long clandestine journeying of the drug. It is concealed in all sorts of ways in order to get it down to the coast; in the soles of shoes, in the linings of coats, in the poles of sedan-chairs, it is even slipped into the luggage of some unsuspecting foreigner. The man who can get two or three large consignments down to the coast is assured of making a fortune. Levantine adventurers come to a port like I-Tchang, and establish themselves there in a trade like watchmaking or the sale of clothing, and if they have been able to insinuate themselves into French or English protection they carry on the forbidden trade under cover of their apparent trade, and under the ægis of an enormous flag of France or of England.

It is not at all easy to unmask them, or to dislodge them. The very officers of the trading-boats are not innocent of corruption in the matter. As long as they will keep their eyes shut, they will, at stated intervals, find a nice little sum of money in a drawer which they do not remember to have put there themselves. On the other hand, the Chinese Customs Offices which are administered by foreigners, offer large rewards to anyone who can discover hidden opium. Letters of denunciation are therefore forthcoming from time to time, but the writers of them impose strict secrecy as to their identity, for they know the risks they are running, and that their lives would not be worth very much if their names became known. Sometimes a passenger disappears during the night from one of the river boats. Vengeance has been wreaked.

And so, through the mountain defiles, the colossal gorges, across the vast plains of mud, as if escorted by an escort of the passions which it excites, the dark and evil opium goes down to the coast, down to the ports, where it is shipped to capitals far away. Sometimes, by a lucky chance, some part of the organisation of this gigantic fraud is exposed, but it spreads such tenacious roots so deeply into the national life, it is so strong in

the face of the weakness and disorderly management of the public services, that very often the man who has raised a corner of the veil is terrified by what he sees, and lets it fall again. One last touch I must add, which is quite in keeping with the rest. The Bolshevists make use of this national weakness for their propaganda, and the poison of their ideas is the dose which follows close upon a dose of opium.

The taste for opium is very strongly rooted in the Far East, and may perhaps be accounted for by the need of escape from sorrow, or perhaps only tedium, which lies in every soul. The sage can accomplish this by using the resources of his mind, but many feebler organisations can most easily find escape in a drug or a stimulant. Take, for instance, the servants on ocean liners. All day long they perform monotonous and mechanical tasks in adroit silence. And when their tasks are finished, they can put the whole thing behind them by the use of opium as easily as any great merchant or official.

And here again we see one more proof of the everlasting opposition of East and West. Drunkenness in the West has the effect in the first place of increasing activity. The drunkard wants to be on the move, and all gestures, all activities appear to him to be within his province. The reclining opium-smoker disdains to move. He need not discard his personal dignity. He lies motionless. The activities of the drunkard become accentuated to ridiculous fury, while the torpor of the opium smoker is reaching out to ecstasy. But it needed the empty boring days of life in old China to keep the whole population really faithful to opium, days when the mandarins hardly ever went out, and then only in their chairs. Nowadays the Chinese are beginning to go out as much as we do, and to dissipate their energies in the same way. No doubt their lives will be healthier, but they will have lost some savour of elegance and mystery ; they will learn to walk shoulder to shoulder with us in the unspeakable banality of modern life.

CHAPTER V

On the banks of the Yang-Tse and of the tributary, the Han-Kiang lies the triple city of Han-Keou, Wou-Tchang and Han-Yang. Many people, finding themselves in a prophetical vein, pronounce this to be the future capital of China, midway between South and North, when a railway has been constructed between Pekin and Canton, and another along the bank of the Yang-Tse right up to Se-Tchuen in order to open up its agricultural and mineral wealth. This prosperity is not yet in sight.

The Government at Pekin keeps up an endless shuffling with the European magnates who are trying to come to an understanding with them and the projected railway on the left bank of the river is not likely to be constructed for many a long year to come. The negotiations have been broken off. The foreign banks are more and more unwilling to advance large sums to the Chinese, because in the present reign of disorder and the absence of all real government it would be impossible for them to recover their money if any serious difficulties broke out.

At the same time the famine is getting the upper hand North of the river. A French engineer who has just come up from Pekin, and who knows China well, for he has lived here a long time, told me that he found an old man and a child on the board at the back of his cart as he was journeying up. They asked his permission to stay there. He allowed them to remain and then began to talk to them. They had simply left home in order that there might be two less mouths to feed, but they did not know in the least where to go. The

Frenchman gave the old man some money, and the child a large piece of bread. In spite of his hunger the child did not allow himself to begin eating. He handed the bread to his grandfather, who divided it between them, eating the crumb himself and giving the crust to the child. Then the old man proposed that the Frenchman should take the child with him, so that at any rate he might be sure of enough to eat, but, while he was speaking, the child kept his eyes fixed on his grandfather, and in spite of the misery which was the portion of them both he did not seem to wish to leave the old man.

Although this reach of the river is about two hundred kilometres from the mouth, the influence of foreigners here is almost as apparent as it is on the coast. The Concessions lie next to the Chinese town with their European quays and streets. You notice large buildings, which are combinations of club, hotel and college. These are the establishments of the famous Young Men's Christian Association. Young Chinamen are received and entertained there, and their different problems dealt with. The only condition of membership is to sign the rolls of the establishment which constitute a vast floating Protestantism with more expense than trouble to the organisers.

Young Chinamen are not really influenced or transformed by their association with this society. But to the outer eye they certainly are transformed. Their manners have changed; they adopt new fashions, they go about everywhere and take up new interests and now that the habitual reserve of their race in the old days has been wiped off their faces, these have become absolute revelations of the bursting conceit of their owners. They have replaced the studied courtesy of their fathers by manners which are far more abrupt; but it must never be forgotten that side by side with the great overruling tradition of politeness in China, there runs another, not so much followed, but never allowed to lapse, the tradition of unvarnished candour and cynicism, and many of the

students will fall back upon it most willingly when they have to deal with foreigners.

Beside the foreign quarter runs the Chinese town with the usual straight streets, shops, and propitiatory inscriptions. The merchants from each province co-operate here, and each co-operation is established in a very handsome building. My guide on my walks was the French Consul, M. Lecomte, who is a learned connoisseur of ancient China as well as a skilled observer of its modern developments. He took me to see the establishment of the firm of merchants from Kiang-Si. As this is a province which produces porcelain, the whole building was brilliant with a facing of porcelain tiles, bathed in the hard, pure sunshine of October when I saw them. We walked through many sumptuous chambers where gilded and pot-bellied Genii sat entombed, where heavy lanterns hung from the ceiling, where a luxury at once substantial, *bourgeois* and opulent was the rule, trimmed up with incongruously slight and tiny details in ornament, which seemed to represent the childish and affected and stunted imaginations which keep a perilous hold upon the whole imposing mass of Chinese materialism.

But the most charming thing about that house of merchandise was the garden. It was a little walled garden with a pavilion and a pool and miniature island, and the carmine leaves of a few bushes. There, a few paces from the hubbub of the streets the whole sweet silent autumn seemed to have been enclosed in a pretty little cage.

CHAPTER VI

THERE is even more poetry in the flow of great rivers which are widening to their estuaries than in the higher reaches. One would say that, sure at last of reaching the vast ocean of their desires, they cast aside into the reeds all the tools with which hitherto they have fretted out a passage, and calm, pacific and irresistible as all inevitable forces they glide smoothly on to their appointed ends. The traveller yields to the suggestion of this serenity. He feels that he too will arrive at that secret destination where satisfaction will be absolute, and that he will stay there.

Below the city of Han-Keou the Yang-Tse simply makes the whole landscape. The wavy lines of the river spread out to join the horizon, and the face of the waters looking up, seems almost to equal the skies looking down. A hill or an isolated rock stand out here and there in the golden vaporous air. Gulls follow the boat, soaring and swooping in play, and when you look up and see them planing straight overhead, their bodies hardly afford enough resistance to the light to appear opaque between their transparent wings.

I have the luck to be the only passenger on the English boat which is taking me down river, so that nothing obliges me to forego the pleasure of being really myself, and of abandoning myself to the strangeness and beauty of my journey. At such times, if one were to tear the secrets of a traveller's soul from him, one would find only this: a lovely ineffable friendship with the clouds, which decidedly is not of earth, and an ecstasy of azure, poured into his being, from the water and the sky.

This voyage has bestowed a double boon on me. It

gives me more precision in my thoughts, at the same time as more liberty for my dreams. To-day I am all dreams. And it is escape! What annihilation, what a rapturous loss of self! A sail shines white in the distance, and an arrowy flight of wild duck punctuates the wells of divine light overhead, with their swift, taut shapes. A great silvery-white cloud looming up, becomes the magnificent bearer of my soul, and it seems to me that my soul spreads all over its splendid surface, that it is wedded to those swelling masses and gentle hollows, that it triumphs with the cloud over the great watery landscape.

Yet, every now and then, something crosses the field of my vision. It is the top half of the captain of the boat, who is taking his constitutional on the bridge. At first, I must admit, he does not seem to count; my dreams overwhelm the sight of him; but gradually, as it swings back upon me with the regularity of a pendulum, the sight forces my attention. I become aware of his solid profile outlined against the sky, of his clean-shaven lips and cheeks, of the short pipe in his mouth, and his correct nautical cap set on with a knowing twist towards one ear, and I begin to feel interest in the man who keeps passing into my view. Every morning he greets me cordially, and then we rarely exchange any remarks except at meals, when he makes exactly the same comments on the Germans and the Bolshevists that every other Englishman of his type would make.

Now, as the cloud sails away, my curiosity fastens upon this English seaman, and I begin to think, in spite of myself, for my state of beatitude is over. Nothing could be more unlike the English method of counting in the world than the French method. The English make themselves great and respected by cohesion and similitude, which do not originate so much in self-imposed discipline as in their island-birth, and the physical and mental conformation which is common to so many of them. A healthy simplicity of mind, which

has been derided flippantly all over Europe, is doubtless one of the elements of English greatness, for it removes them from the influence of all useless subtleties.

They are nearly all impregnated with certain just and summary conclusions, which make frequent appearances in their conversation, and are strictly applied to their conduct.

The effect of this wonderful agreement among themselves makes an immense impression upon the world. Upon arriving in a new country every one of them takes immediate advantage of the presence of their forerunners. It is always the same England that every Englishman evokes. While every Frenchman, on the contrary, presents a different aspect of France. Every Frenchman is proud of the fact that he thinks for himself, and that he has a separate mental existence from his fellows. Englishmen do their work, but look forward most of the time to their pleasure—or their leisure. A Frenchman pours more energy into the tasks of his life than they really demand. He does not fill a post, he overflows in it.

You may notice the difference between the two races very clearly in their clothes. The well-dressed Englishman conforms to the prevailing fashion and custom because he would refuse to look conspicuous anywhere; the Frenchman wants to look conspicuous. Look at the French passengers on any steamer. A blatant negligence in their dress is wedded to incongruous and unsuitable coquetries. Their costumes fly many different signals. It is unusual to find that the colour of the tie has not quite forgotten what colour the socks are. The men are enclosed in the long, tight-fitting overcoats that they would wear in town, and whatever particular phantasy in hat or cap is poised on their heads, you may be certain of one thing: it will be too small.

Once an Englishman gets into a foreign country he takes no notice of the people round him, and parades his tranquil egoism four square among them. A French-

man notices what manner of people his neighbours are, and he suffers if he is not noticed. However, this state of affairs is changing to a certain degree. Formerly, when a Frenchman met compatriots in a distant land and wanted to let them see how intelligent he was, he found no better means of doing it than by holding up his own chiefs to derision. But Frenchmen seem now to be arriving at the conclusion that a nation in separate grains is not so effective in the modern world as a cohesive mass. They must learn the art of cohesion. In the matter of dress the young man of to-day is openly disgusted by the pretensious negligence which is still regarded as a good joke by many of his elders. He is beginning to dress like an Englishman, and in doing so he is only coming back to our own traditions by a long way round, for in days gone by, Frenchmen were the best turned-out men in Europe.

And yet in spite of the great differences between the two races, if there should happen to be a Frenchman and an Englishman, both above the average, living in a town of the Far East, you may be sure that they will be friends. It is because they move on the same level and can meet without going "up or down stairs." Both nations have succeeded in creating a type of man which is a finished article, so that when each one perceives the existence of certain indications in the other, in spite of the difference of nationality, he is sure of the whole man.

It is when you see examples of these noble qualities that you dream almost nostalgically of the benefit to the whole world which might result from a real friendship between the two races, which, alas, is impossible! There are not enough liaisons between the best elements in both countries. You must add to that the inevitable clash of national interests, often aggravated by a mechanical habit of antagonism, by the French taste for useless recrimination, and by the time-honoured English custom of taking everything for England and leaving nothing for anybody else.

And it is curious to observe that even now, after the two nations have come to know each other stripped bare, under the terrible searchlight of war, they will still accept the silliest and most conventional threadbare estimations of one another, even when they are favourably inclined. Just now I was turning over the pages of a big illustrated journal published in London. The editors had been kind enough to ask one of our illustrating artists to contribute a drawing which would serve as an emblem of the friendly relations between the two countries. The scene which the French artist represented was the visit of a young Englishman to a French château. He, in the drawing, is seen standing on the terrace engaged in fascinating a whole group of young girls. The mothers, wearing touched, admiring expressions, are grouped a little way off, in order to leave their offspring full freedom for flirtation. Even the maid who is serving the tea gazes at the young Englishman.

This picture would lead one to suppose that there are no men in France. There is no hint of the existence of Frenchmen! The drawing can only be described as inadequate. One may very well be proud of the attractiveness exercised by Frenchwomen, it is none the less true that France has deserved to be represented by something greater than pretty faces, and the encouraging glances which girls bestow on foreigners: for France is virile.

BOOK IV

THE TOWNS

CHAPTER I

I WANT to paint Nankin with a very light touch just as I saw it bathed in a light as serene as that of Pekin, only softer and more mellow, while an almost invisible white moon passed across the azure of the sky, as if to add another softening touch.

Nankin was wrecked and almost destroyed by the insurrection of the Taipings. The city is almost too much spread out in its huge enclosure, and the walls enclose large tracts of the countryside, with foliage reddened by the autumn, white goats on the pastures, and verdant little orchards making green patches everywhere in the mirror-like surface of the water. There are wide, limpid pools as well as brimming canals, where a bridge like half the circumference of a circle bears an unsubstantial figure on its slender arch, a figure which appears to melt into the surrounding atmosphere as you look at it, like the figures which people the canvases of Guardi, which seem to have been created with one touch of his brush, or those which crowd the frescoed walls in the house of Livia in Rome.

And I want to touch in the other figures which were moving idly in this ocean of light as in some region of pure joy; and then, the temple roofs, salient and richly coloured; and here and there the swelling mounds of tombs; and in the background the smooth, bare flank of the mountain, velvety under the flooding light; and then the city itself with its streets of close-packed houses with the poles on which awnings were hung in the summer on the house-tops, looking like piles which implant the town upside down into the sky! And I must make you see the filmy, fluttering flags and the

open houses inundated with steady, unvarying light, where the ordinary tasks of life seem to be peformed with swimming facility, like the motions of under-water creatures seen from above. There in that liquid flood of light how easily the copper-beaters swing their enormous hammers ; and the fantastic collection displayed in the antiquarian's narrow shop looks like the queer assortment of disconnected objects that a magpie makes, and what a depth and prosperous appearance the workshop of the coffin-makers has acquired.

And then there are the children with metal charms or medals in their caps, and at intervals, diviners behind their tables. Look at that old astrologer with a portentous head of hair and strangely brilliant eyes as keenly on the watch as any experienced old rat ! And now, suddenly running through the crowd at a jog-trot come two files of a weird fire brigade, the firemen wearing copper helmets which might have come straight out of the reign of Louis Philippe, followed by files of coolies in conical hats, each carrying two charming little buckets swinging from the extremities of a bamboo, little buckets which seem less intended to extinguish a fire than to sprinkle a few refreshing drops upon the glorious, writhing blossom of the flames ; and then there is that deserted street bordered with houses, which, like some stage scenes, look smaller than the characters who are going to make use of them ; and then once more, a stretch of open ground with a pond like a round hole in it, and high, sighing trees proclaiming their dedication to autumn in fiery colour ; and beneath a wall, a professional story-teller, beginning his tale in a guttural voice, with bold, cynical glances as he faces his fascinated audience, and further off, retired into the high seclusion of its own courts, the Temple of Confucius, with double enamelled roofs, which exhales an indescribable disdain from the trenchant exactitude of its lines.

And now comes my return by a different road, where

I saw a European cab, draped with red, waiting before a door; and then suddenly the sound of galloping, a shout, and the cab rushed by, giving me just time to see in its depths a little Chinese bride blushing like a rose with brilliant rouge, under her large, elaborate *coiffure*, which was loaded with rosettes and quivering with pendants; and unforgettable is the dashing flight of the cab which carried away into the distance a fat female servant (diminishing her size as it went) who was clinging to the back of it, like a frog on a shiny blackboard.

And then, finally, there is the station where I waited for the little train back to the river, looking over a wall at some plane trees almost bare of leaves, printed sharply upon the evening sky, to their ultimate small twigs; and some rooks were perched in the branches for the night making startling black patches against the sky of liquid amber, patches of almost oily black, which seemed too weighty for the slim branches on which they sat with such heavy confidence. And then close to me on the platform were a few Chinamen veiled in shadow, one of them a little vendor who carried the apparatus of a whole restaurant in his two baskets; in one of the baskets there was cooked food, and bowls to eat from and a little water to rinse them in, and in the other a variety of cakes, and a bag of nuts, and a wire-basket to grill them in over the tiniest stove you can imagine, where, in the twilight, three glowing coals became the most mystic of mystic roses.

And then comes my return to the river in a railway carriage where the other passengers were all Chinese, dressed in grey and black, wearing the little black caps which seem to set lids of discretion upon Chinese brains, though some of the wearers were obese and wore an expression of beatitude, while others were thin and fine-drawn and suffering from some feverish anxiety apparently, but they were all middle class, and all full of polite attentions to each other. There were two friends standing up while they disputed over the pleasure

of yielding up the last remaining seat to each other. A third man, who was acquainted with both, had risen to join in the debate. At length when several passengers got out, they all sat down together and conversation was maintained with plentiful smiles, and positive flutters of politeness, and with mutual offers of sweets and confectionery.

However, when our train came to a prolonged stand-still quite close to our destination, my companions all decided, one after another, to get out and walk. I followed their example and saw them fade away into the vague milky twilight when they were only a few paces away from me and looking up I admired the glacial purity of the moon already risen in the autumn sky, while from the distance came the deep, serious bark of some watch-dog.

CHAPTER II

Some towns remain in the traveller's memory as more aerial than terrestial. Such was Nankin. But Shanghai —well, Shanghai is of the earth, earthy, a city of bustling trade and modern luxury, and what with its steamboats and its quays and its mammoth hotels, it seems more like the reflection of America than the extremity of China.

Many Shanghai people made a fortune out of the war, and though the pendulum is beginning to swing back, you still breathe an atmosphere of the rather oppressive self-confidence which sprang from this unlooked-for prosperity. This is the best place for observing the rivalry of nations who want to get influence in China. Japan and the United States are always disputing the first place. Japan is condemned to imperialism by physical conditions. Her population is increasing rapidly, and it will have to overflow somewhere. But the Japanese are not robust enough to exist *anywhere*. They cannot accustom themselves to the brutal climate of oriental Siberia, nor to the unhealthy heat of Formosa, even Korea does not suit them very well. China is the only country which suits them in every way, besides, in the other regions just named there are neither the mines to yield them raw material for their industries, nor the markets for their wares when they are made.

They were already engaged in spreading their influence when the war broke out, and this afforded them an undreamt-of chance of developing their plans in China without hindrance. Not a single European power was in a position to oppose them, and even the United States appeared to recognise their predominance. After taking possession of Kiao-Tcheou and of Shantung, the crumbling

of the Russian Empire gave them the chance to extend their power all through oriental Siberia, and to introduce their merchandise there, as they had done in China, managing to escape all import duty which every other nation has to pay. In January 1915 they presented the Chinese Government with a secret list of twenty-one demands, which has since become famous, and was aimed at nothing less than putting China absolutely into the power of Japan. They returned to the charge in the ultimatum of May 5th, 1916, four-fifths of which was accepted, in which they reserved for themselves the sole right to reorganise the Chinese Army.

Above all, they have taken advantage of the pecuniary necessities of the Chinese Government and the securities which China has given for a succession of loans were nothing less than the whole of her resources. At the same time they pursued a policy of bribing individuals, pensioning off officials, and being kept informed of the necessities of functionaries they were always able to win over the men whose support was necessary to the interests of Japan. Up to now they have favoured the discord between North and South, and when Yuan cheu Kaï attempted to found a dynasty Japanese opposition was the cause of his downfall. But as complete anarchy would not further their own cause, it is quite probable that they will support the restoration of apparent order.

The Europeans in the Far East incessantly fretted by the processes of this policy (for they are conscious of its activity without being able to find a clue to the maze) no doubt credit it with more application and continuity than really exists, and attribute each fresh development to its profound calculations. The truth is that the Japanese would really have the upper hand here, to the exclusion of every other nation, if they were not opposed stoutly by that which passes for public opinion in China.

Of course, China cannot fail to see what their neighbours are aiming at, and many of the Chinese would leave them to rule over the Empire quite willingly,

although disdainfully. This disdain is traditional in a people who put all their faith in the sheer numbers of their population and the sheer extent of their territory. But among the Chinese who read the papers and have dealings with foreigners, principally the students, a more susceptible patriotism has been aroused. The students have been enraged by the cession of Shantung to the Japanese, and have denied all moral validity to the peace treaty which China has refused to sign on account of this clause. Is this opposition to Japan important, or is it merely negligible ?

The answer depends entirely on your view of the present and the future of China. On the one hand there is the faction which has no doubt that the Chinese will bow to the stronger will, as they always do after some theatrical protestations. Other people, however, see the birth of a national soul in the expressions of defiance. However that may be the Japanese never relax their efforts to influence Chinese minds. They have colleges and professors in China ; one even hears that they make use of Buddhism for their propaganda : they also make use of the Press.

Chinese newspapers are very numerous in the large towns ; about a thousand copies of each is struck off per diem, and we must reckon on each copy having about forty readers. The Chinese public is greedy for sensation, but the appetite differs from the parallel appetite in modern Europe. The Chinese want to hear about fabulous monsters, giant serpents and calves with two heads, and so forth. The newspapers which are in Japanese pay are accordingly stuffed to overflowing with these fables, and articles useful to Japanese propaganda are cleverly inserted between them.

They have other underground activities. They publish at Moukden a review called *Great Asia*, which is the organ of the pan-Asiatic League, and though published in Chinese and Japanese also contains articles in Turkish and Mongolian. It is only available to subscribers.

This is the last ditch of defence in the Japanese policy which is working in the open to get Japan recognised as equal to any other Power, while probably, underground, they are aiming at uniting the whole of Asia against the white man, and this is the scheme of the Bolshevists, to whom Japan is in opposition.

The United States are hardly less interested than Japan in the fate of China. They must have a market there. But they follow a very different policy. They never lose an opportunity of showing the Chinese that they take them seriously, and of offering themselves as defenders of their rights, respectful guardians, who will enable them to form an adequate organisation for dealing with the modern world. By a stroke of adroit generosity they have relinquished their share of the Boxer indemnity, and they make every effort to respond to the desire of acquiring knowledge with which young China is animated. They have established Protestant Missions in all the large towns, richly endowed, with colleges attached. They have a very important establishment near Pekin. The laboratories of a Rockefeller Institute are soon to be opened at Pekin.

The Chinese receive all these kind attentions with phlegm, and it would be difficult to discover what they really think of them. On whom would their favours fall if war were to break out between Japan and America ? There is not the slightest doubt that they would accommodate themselves to the result. If the United States carried off the victory, China would recall all the affronts and insults to which they have been obliged to submit from the " dwarfs," as they call them, and they would feel themselves avenged at last. But, on the other hand, if Japan came out the winner, there is no doubt that they would rejoice profoundly over a proof of the supremacy of the yellow race.

As for the position of France in China it is no use referring to that apart from the subject of the War, which was followed as attentively in China as elsewhere,

but naturally the sentiments which it aroused here are in relation to the surroundings which produced them. In Chinese eyes the War in the first place was a spectacle of the white men at each other's throats. What have they retained from the spectacle ? Chiefly the new ideas and principles which were widely diffused at the time, and now China is not backward in invoking them whenever they may be useful to her.

The Allies succeeded in getting China's declared support. Germany and Austria have accordingly lost their privileges here, and Russia has abandoned hers. The Chinese are now waiting for the other nations to do the same. Before the War, Germany had great *prestige* in China. The order and prosperity which reigned in her colony, the merchant's large bold treatment of business, the industry, zeal and plain-dealing of her commercial travellers, all contributed to the establishment of her credit. The majority of the Chinese never doubted that Germany would be the conqueror. Only the evidence of facts was able to convince them to the contrary.

Looking at it all from a distance, from a bird's-eye point of view, they saw that the victories of the Entente had been obtained under French auspices everywhere, and could be referred back to the command of our generals. At any rate they assigned the principal honours to us. Even from that distance they were sure of their opinion that it was our race that had saved the world by its simple heroism under the sun of glory which has never set on the French horizon. But nations do not dwell long upon the memory of sublime moments. The Chinese, for all their searching, have not been able to discover any cash return for our victory. They see France, poor in men, poor in money, and hideously burdened by the exchange.

Our victory makes a great frame for our country, but so far we have not been able to fill it, in spite of the zealous toil of many Frenchmen and the audacity of

some. Yet, another way of influence is open to us. The Chinese at present are above all anxious to learn, and the teachers that they ask for and really desire, are the Americans and the French. But that brings us to a far more subtle order of ideas, to the image of France, as seen by the world at large.

Most of my compatriots are artless enough to imagine that France is loved everywhere; this is very far from being the case, and whatever claim she may really have to the affection of nations, it is as well to remember that wherever love and admiration is really deserved, envy is too often substituted for both.

The doubtful feeling which exists about our country is, in the first place, due to the propaganda of our enemies and rivals, here, as elsewhere, there is no lack of interested slanderers who wish to get us starved out of China by representing us as ogres. But they would not have so much success if it were not for the irresolute policy which we pursue, which adopts different attitudes in turn with the knowledge that none of them are well supported. All human action which is to be exercised in a large way upon large masses must be obviously consistent and almost brutally persistent. Force used unremittingly is less irritating than when it is applied by fits and starts, or at untimely moments, when it inspires more anger than fear.

France has this weakness; she wishes to please, and she lets it be known that she wishes to please. Thus she has fallen into a state of dependence in which she is kept for the diversion of others, while suffrages are sold to her which she ought never to have sued for. And yet, this doubtful feeling which she inspires is not only due to her political irresolution but in a sort of way it is bound up with the complexity of her genius, which is almost beyond the understanding of the average among mankind on account of its subtlety.

All the other nations of Europe keep their places in relation to their commercial prosperity. France alone

preserves her *prestige* through several idealistic channels, and in that way she is often to be compared to a great lady who has to live below her station. Other nations always show the same face ; one drawing will represent each one of them. But France has different faces for different observers ; some look on her as the country for pleasure-seekers, while those who really know her are fully aware that she is the country of unremitting intellectual activity and the most serious virtues.

Some see her as the mother of revolutions, while those who know the heights to which her genuis can attain will swear to it that she is the very mistress of ordered government. But lustre, lamp or torch, her emblem is always Light.

One aspiration runs through the differences of feeling which she creates which is common to them all ; men demand of her that she shall bring into ordered government something which surpasses it, and then sometimes they are angry with her because she succeeds. The clarity with which she defines difficulties, the inconvenient X-rays which she plunges into dim masses of confusion, make it less easy to push matters through in many cases where settlement is demanded at any price. Then those who make their own pleasure a law will abuse her for consulting her own interests. She is treated as an actress who must go through a death scene before she can win applause, and she is not quite untroubled by all these varied reproaches, so naïve is she at bottom, so easily forced to play the sublime parts of the world.

And so her complexity attracts and repels by turns. As with human beings, she is *never* forgiven for not being subject to the laws which are necessary to the majority ; for defying the doctor's opinions and getting well quietly in her own way ; for slipping out of difficulties in which her enemies joyfully considered her " done for," and for suddenly turning out to be more serious than austerity itself, and stronger than force. And so it comes about that any misfortunes that she suffers are a cause of

unavowable joy to many foreign nations, but at the same time there is no soul of the highest quality which does not shiver with apprehension if there is any real danger that she, who is not like others, may succumb.

Thus the part that France has to play in the world is a peculiarly delicate one, but nations like individuals can only find real force for the support of their beings by descending into their own depths for it, and she may find the elements for exceptional power within herself.

But only on certain conditions. As she is not essentially an industrial country it is strictly necessary that her interests should be defended and her genius interpreted correctly if she is to hold the position in the world to which she is now returning. At national conferences she above all must be represented by the picked men of the nation, men who are distinguished by reason of their wide knowledge their profound ideas and their courtesy and charm of manner. In that way the virtual idea of France which exits among foreigners can be turned into reality. But if small talents and profound ignorance are sent abroad to represent France we must take the consequences. France will not be represented, and her influence will fail to reach its objectives. There is no nation to whom definite doctrines are more necessary. Now that so many nations are combining a vague desire for independence, with a leaning towards Occidental culture, they turn by instinct to our country. They are in search of the nation which has something to bestow, the only one which lives for humanity, the only one which can help them to fulfil themselves without menace.

Our country must manage to preserve a sufficient economic power to enable her to play this magisterial part. A pediment cannot lie on the ground, unless the building be a ruin. On the other hand, the more definite France makes her moral and intellectual standpoints the better she will be able to define the principles which inspire her, the higher and nobler will her achievements be, and the greater her influence upon the whole world.

On this plane our present weakness is just as apparent as upon any other, and it prevents us from taking advantage of the benefits which accrue to us from the Peace Treaty. The school of German Engineers at Shanghai was handed over to us, but we have never been able to reopen it. If it were not for the Jesuits there would be no institutions in China which diffuse the spirit of the French mind, or maintain the knowledge of our language.

The Jesuit traditions in China are of the noblest. They brought the light of science here and have been faithful to that spirit. I visited a little meteorological observatory at Zi Ka Wei near Shanghai which you cannot enter without some emotion, for it was here that the theory of typhoons was conceived and worked out, by which their coming is now detected and their course prophesied. After making an epitome of all the information which is sent to the observatory from all the semaphores of the coast, the workers there, send out messages as far as Japan on one side and Detroit on the other, so that all ships navigating that area are warned of their peril, and when the typhoon comes whirling over the ocean no luckless vessel is caught in the centre of it. Two Jesuit Fathers do all this invaluable work with the help of a few Chinese assistants.

I will not refer again to the various social institutions founded by the Jesuits, such as crèches, orphanages, workshops, nor to the college where four hundred students, quite as many of them Christian as of any other religion, study both in French and in Chinese, nor to the college for young girls where they receive as good an education as that given by the best European convent schools. I must now deal with the Jesuit University—*The Dawn*, well known throughout the Far East.

As often happens with the undertakings which turn out a brilliant success, it all came about by chance; it was inaugurated seventeen years ago. It now draws about two hundred students to its courses. They

consist of courses in Literature and Law, the Mathematical Sciences, Civil Engineering, Natural Science and Medicine. The degrees are granted after periods of study varying from five to nine years, according to the subject chosen, and the knowledge of French that the student starts with. The professors are all French Jesuits, with the exception of ten laymen who are also French. I had talks with several of the latter, and I did not come across one who was not thoroughly keen about his work. That is easily understood, for I have explained before that there is quite a competition to supply teachers for China among the white nations.

Chinese students make tremendous demands of their teachers, but if they are not disappointed, there are no more faithful and admiring pupils in the world.

This piety of pupil towards master is one of the very strongest feelings known in the Far East, and France would do well to imitate it. I remember a certain colonel with whom I became acquainted in Japan, a dry, brisk little man, full of courteous attentions. As a young officer he had attended a course at our Military School, and it was not difficut to perceive that some of his masters there had left a lasting impression on his mind. One day when we happened to be discussing Marshal Pétain, he told me, not without pride, that he had been a pupil of the Marshal's. " Yes," he said, " and if you meet him you can remind him of his little pupil . . . . " He finished the sentence by murmuring his own name, and his face, which was usually sharp and impassive, was softened by a little passing cloud of emotion, as a diamond's sparkle is misted over by a breath.

I also remember the intense conviction in the manner of Father Henry, the young and charming Rector of *The Dawn*, when he extolled the virtues of some of the young students of the University. He told me that Confucianism had given them extraordinarily well-controlled behaviour, wonderful discretion and exquisite delicacy. One would wonder that young men like these

have not been able to come to the front in the affairs of their country, if one did not know that the national politics keep the best men outside them, by their very dirtiness.

At *The Dawn* one breathes that joyous atmosphere which exists wherever men believe in their work. But the University ought to be extended, the plans for new buildings are ready, new professors are available, but, as usual, money is lacking.

Frenchmen in the Far East, and above all, the missionaries, are accustomed to supplement this want of money by an effort of the soul and by overworking themselves. But there is a point beyond which their struggles must be vain. Modern science demands costly apparatus, and the Chinese could not be expected to believe in badly-equipped instruction. The French Government, fully realising the value of this institution to our country, have made it a grant. Its degrees have been declared to be equal to our *Baccalauréat*, and travelling scholarships have been founded, so that the best students may come over and finish their work in France. At the same time it should be realised that this institution is far from occupying the position that it is worthy to extend to. But in order to give you an idea of the functions that it is capable of performing in China, it is necessary to go into the whole question of Chinese Students.

If you want to know a nation you had much better begin by studying the young people. For, thanks to their exuberance and to the fact that they are not yet rendered discreet by the necessity of retaining employment for the earning of their bread, they involuntarily reveal the soul of the nation. Among youths we can get hold of characters which would otherwise be lost in the crowd, or effectively concealed under the studied caution of middle-age. And this is especially true of the Chinese.

The term student includes not only the young men of Pekin University, but also any men who are following any course in any college, and also embraces the schoolboys. Thus united it is not surprising that they bulk the largest in the public eye, and that they do not fail to rouse an uneasy feeling in the breasts of their compatriots of riper years. Angered by the national disorder, confusedly aware of the dangers they are running, they are determined to intervene without knowing how to do it. Accordingly, they get up troublesome revolts and go "on strike." They always take their masters by surprise and the revolts rarely originate from any case for discontent within the college.

It generally happens that the professor is taking his class as usual, when suddenly a youth starts up and shouts: "China is being done to death!" or some other equally stagey ejaculation, and that is the signal for the rising. It was thus that in 1918 the students of Pekin University went "on strike," as a protest against the foreign policy of the Government. The students of Shanghai, and even the students of *The Dawn* supported their comrades either from conviction or because it would have looked bad to leave them in the lurch.

Students head all the public protestations against Japanese influence, and constrain the populace to boycott their goods. I know very well that it is easy to show up the incoherence of these manifestations, in which the agitators are often serving interests that they have no knowledge of. Thus it was that in a certain large coast town one of the most venemous detractors of the Japanese was a merchant in a large way, who bought up all the goods that he had boycotted, at a huge profit.

But we should not allow ourselves to be deflected from the main issues by our amusement at these details, which may be dangerous in so far as they obscure the profound meaning of the movement.

Although in these actions the students are obviously only feeling the way, it is unmistakable that a new force

is struggling to the light and becoming conscious of itself; and as each of these crises makes it more and more conscious of itself, the crises naturally recur. And it is certain by the change in inner politics that the agitations have not been altogether in vain. China has always been a country where every one pays a good deal of attention to public opinion. Even two thousand years ago it was necessary to forbid Ministers of State to lend an attentive ear to popular clamour, for that voice had enough power by itself to make or mar the Empire.

The mandarins have always been somewhat in awe of the criticism of unemployed graduates and this fear has often kept a wholesome check upon their abuses. Even if the student class does not quite succeed in preventing the politicians from indulging in corruption and intrigue, it does succeed in rendering the officials distinctly uneasy by the watchfulness of its side-glance. When the student-strikers went so far as to besiege the house of a Minister and try to set it on fire, as they did in Pekin, one can easily believe that in a country where appearances are piously respected, and where, moreover, many high officials are remarkable for their pusillanimity, the object of the demonstration did not regard it unmoved by vexation.

There are also political men who take up the claims of the students in order to make themselves popular, and thus ideas which had only found existence in words pass into the region of practical politics; this was the case with extra-territoriality. By dint of demanding its suppression the Chinese came to believe that they really desired it, and perhaps will obtain it at the very moment when everything points to the fact that its existence is legitimate and often profitable to the Chinese themselves.

However, the Ministers have their own method of getting even with the young men. They have a certain number of appointments to offer to the foremost among them, and thus crown their hopes. Chinese students pique themselves on their love of justice above all, but

in anything which affects their own advancement they have to fall back upon relying on influence. Whosoever climbs in the world carries a clientele with him, in China. When the fabulous Yellow Emperor was snatched up into Heaven, his whole court took their places on the dragon which bore him away, and the stragglers who ran up too late for places, went up clinging to the monster's whiskers. The allegory keeps its truth even unto this day.

The influence of the students is no less felt in the dealings with foreign affairs. It seems at the first glance as if the foreign powers must have more liberty of action in China than ever. No doubt a government too weak to resist the Powers, and strong enough to rule over its own subjects, would suit Europe better than too complete an anarchy. But the internal disorder might surely be turned to account by the Powers for their own ends ? Surely it makes their position easier ? On the contrary, China has never been so much wooed and flattered before. The policy of the zones of influence has been abandoned, and at a moment when the Chinese are holding the unity of their country cheap, foreigners are still respecting the phantom of it. The spirit of this disrupted China intimidates them. The most patent of all the causes of weakness in the white nations is the impossibility of settling on a policy. But new words were forged in Europe during the War, and now Europeans must look on while the Asiatic races flourish the verbal weapons provided by Europe.

One would say that in the present condition of uncertainty the care of their own interests would be a sufficient guide to the Powers, but realism is easier to recommend than to define in the presence of a reality bristling with contradictions, which lends itself to different interpretations. No doubt, to take advantage of privileges one still enjoys, is a form of realism, but is it not also realism to recognise the existence of forces striving to their birth, which may change the face of China ?

Any kind of constraint, even if successful in producing

results, runs the risk of producing lasting rancour. The students' patriotic susceptibility is the most irritable that can be imagined. They are bound to accept instruction from foreigners, but anything which remotely savours of official intervention of a Power in the college life is absolutely insupportable to them, and you may see them on the defensive if the breath of a breeze-blown flag of Europe brushes their foreheads. Nevertheless, however patriotic they are or wish to be, they hold no converse with the soldiers. The disdainful aversion of the scholar for the warrior exists in them still, surviving from Antiquity. It was in vain that a very up-to-date general tried to recruit officers from among them. Only two or three responded, and it would require quite exceptional pressure to modify this attitude of mind, so firmly is it rooted in the Chinese soul. But it goes without saying, that they have an even greater antipathy to foreign soldiers than to their own.

And yet it is the youth of China which abandons itself without reserve to Occidental influence in spite of its almost morbid susceptibility on the point of foreign intervention. It is impossible to exaggerate the greatness of Europe's opportunity for influencing the mind of young China, which is opening up vast surfaces of sheer receptiveness at the present moment, if we will but perceive them. This is so truly the case that any nation which was clever enough and unscrupulous enough, might take advantage of it for its own ends.

Why need this avidity astonish us? We generally conceive of the Far East in a state of scorn and defiance with regard to our doctrines. We must also consider them in the condition of infatuation, for their infatuations know no limits. I have already remarked on the facility with which the Chinese admit contradictory beliefs into their minds. These beliefs enter their minds without making any exactions, and exist calmly side by side. This is what happens while a Chinaman is in his normal workaday frame of mind. Once he is roused out of

that he can abandon himself to the idea that has seized him without a struggle. He is its slave.

Remember the fervour with which Christianity was received in Japan in the sixteenth century, although it was in opposition to all the basic principles on which Japanese society rests. In 1868, at the time of the Restoration, they adopted modern ideas no less violently, particularly the theories of Montesquieu, which seemed to them to be allied to those of Mencius. Karl Marx has been the object of the same enthusiasm since then.

The eternal child beneath the Asiatic's external gravity and phlegm adds ardour to these transports. They believe that they have found the explanation of everything in each new craze. They let everything go in the idea that they have at last grasped everything. And believing that they are in possession of the truth they do not hesitate to apply it. When the Chinese are sure that they are right they act upon this assumption at once, and some of them, no less absolute than the Jacobins, are ready to wound reality with the avenging swords of logic.

In France, however, a systematic spirit presided only too rigorously over every innovation. In China innovations are far more incoherent and disorderly. We have always been accustomed to look upon it as a country of strict moderation, and this is true of a certain aspect of things. But it can quite as well be regarded as the land of extremes, for one of its received principles is the absolute avoidance of change, which makes one impregnable unit of its social system, so that when a change is to come about the whole scheme must be shattered, to be remoulded. Innovators have generally been prudent enough to back themselves with the authorisation of some ancient text in order to justify their subversions. When they are thus protected and have conciliated the Conservatives, they go ahead, and nothing will stop them. It was after this fashion that Wang Mang tried to establish Communism in the Empire in 23 A.D. He maintained

that the Empire had been established under the rule of Communism.

In the eleventh century the famous Wang Nan Tcheu made the same attempt. Some people try to look upon him as the precursor of the new China which may even now arise, but the truth is that he was only a terrible mischief-maker, but perhaps this very title fits him for the position now claimed for him. It is certain that he could not manage his affairs. He dared to proclaim that one must not believe in Destiny, nor conform to the example of one's ancestors, nor take heed of popular opinion; he reformed the examination system and banished the influence of Confucius. Everything was put into the power of the State, and like the Bolshevists, he organised a skilful system of *espionage* and made "informing" obligatory. He instituted a new Penal Code, and cut up the entire Empire into groups holding ten families each, requisitioning all the sons from the third downwards for the Imperial forces; he established fixed rules for markets, invented a system of loans from the State on the security of harvests, and finally threw China into indescribable disorder.

Even in 1898 when reforms were attempted in dramatic circumstances by men as worthy of esteem and sympathy as Kang-You-Wei and Leang-Ki-Tchao, it simply rained decrees. No doubt in all these cases, and particularly in the last one, there is a historical reason for this. The power of the innovators being far more absolute than assured, they were always forced to precipitate matters. It is none the less certain that when the Chinese mind and soul do escape from their long tutelage they find a desperate and intoxicated pleasure in making a new world by decree as fast as they can.

This disposition is very noticeable among the students, especially when they return from abroad. They come back into China less as reformers than as ravagers. However sincerely one may be interested in the real progress of civilisation with better ends in view than

disorder and chaos, it is impossible to avoid seeing that the intellectual relations which exist between two worlds like the East and the West must be surrounded with infinite precautions. Serious students of the question are agreed in believing that great advantages are to be reaped by submitting the young men of China to our influence in universities in their own country to begin with, and common sense cannot but agree. Only in this way can they approach us without being torn out of their own race by the roots, and instead of throwing them into an entirely new world, where everything combines to bewilder them, where a chance offence to their *amour-propre* may arouse their hatred, where extraordinary strength of mind is necessary to enable them to dominate all externals, it would be enough to choose the professors sent out to them with the utmost tact and wisdom, to enable them to get a just idea of our essential qualities in the easiest way. After this preparation they might come to Europe with far less risk and with far more advantage. We can now realise the unparalleled importance of institutions like the Jesuit University if they manage to fill the whole frame which is offered to them : they can be true mediators between two worlds.

CHAPTER III

Urged by a last longing to return to old China I started for Hang-Tcheow this afternoon from Shanghai. This town on the banks of a lake, which is connected with the sea by a river, is the capital from which the superfine effeminate civilisation of the Sungs spread like a lotus plant. It was then called Lin-ngan : Desired Repose. Marco Polo described it a little later under the name of Quinsay. It appeared to him as another Venice (more marvellous than his own water-city) with its innumerable canals and its twelve thousand stone bridges, with a never-ending procession of boats and ships passing under them, and ten soldiers to guard each one. There were also three thousand public baths, a hundred and sixty main streets, and sixteen hundred thousand houses. Twelve crafts were practised by the multitude of artisans, and each guild had an overlord who never touched a tool, and lived in a state of grave magnificence. Jews, Christians, Mussulmen and Sun-worshippers mingled in the throng of Buddhists.

All the inhabitants were well versed in astrology, and as soon as a child was born its horoscope was drawn up. In the middle of the humming town the palace walls enclosed a region of slumbrous peace, and a palace of one thousand painted and gilded halls, and many bosky parks, and placid lakes and orchards of delectable fruits. Temples stood on the banks of the great lake, and convents and many pleasure-houses.

Of all this, there is nothing left. Nothing. However brutal destruction may be in the Occident, it is rarely total effacement. In the two worlds of East and West

things participate in the nature of men. Our monuments resist to the last. The heaps of stone or brick cry their protest aloud from the ruins. The Asiatic buildings are more magnificent but less resistant, and they yield to time just as a cloud yields to the wind which sweeps it away. This accords with the taste of Asia, where, one would say that death is beloved.

The train crossed a tract of flat country where canals abound. Nothing is sweeter to the eye than these alternations of water and earth. The earth smiles back from these mirrors of water which reflect all the light of the sky. She loses her weighty quality and gains something aerial. Sails cut across the lines of the fields everywhere just as they do in Holland, faintly swelled by the breeze and radiant with the pure light. The light gives everything that golden colour which announces the coming of rain, and one would say that the sun's gold is not equally distributed, but concentrated at some points.

A little wedding procession, bathed in light, advanced up the road which runs along the railway-line. As the train halted at a wayside station I was able to observe this sacrifice to Hymen. First came two rather absent-minded children carrying banners, and then a band of musicians marching in time to their own shrill, cheerful notes ; they were playing mouth organs, single flutes and double flutes, but you could not really see what their instruments were, hidden under ornaments of glass beads with falling pendants, like showers of light. Behind them the bride's carrying-chair jogged along, blazing a sharper vermilion in the light of the setting sun. Porters, children and musicians were all as poorly dressed as usual, and they made a sombre background for all the bright paraphernalia of the wedding party, which alone had any existence with its flutters and sparkles and palpitations, which were reflected back as calmer, simpler phenomena by the surrounding waters.

The next day when I opened my window I saw that

fine gentle rain was falling. The low sky and falling clouds obscured the view and the lake was merely inert. Some boats were moored to the bank opposite the hotel, but when I tried to get two boatmen a little later, I had considerable difficulty in obtaining them.

The Chinese have a horror of rain. They like to spend a wet day squatting beside a fire keeping up interminable chatter. At last I succeeded in getting two men to come, and we started. But they *were* so much upset! Though we were sheltered under an awning and the rain was nothing to speak of, they kept showing me the marks of a few drops on their sleeves with a sorrowful air, as if, instead of wetting some wretched old linen clothes, they were murdering priceless silk vests.

I occupied myself with looking across the peaceful lake, which is rectangular, like a great harbour. Flights of wild duck manœuvred over the water and settled amid splashes of liquid silver. North and South stand the only two ancient monuments which still exist: two *stûpa* of the tenth century, which have rather a naked look on their foundations. One stands above the shore which I have just left, like a long needle of stone, the other on the opposite bank, which I was approaching, is a massive tower. On my right I could see the long, flat embankment which was built by the famous poet Sou Tung-pouo, when he was Governor of the town. Its line is broken here and there by the arches of some small bridges. Here the poet could take delicious walks. I passed two islets poised, or as it were, "served up," on the lake with ruined temples lying level with the water. In the old days there were two magnificent palaces full of rich furniture and silver, which could be hired by anyone for the entertainment of friends on these islands.

Then I reached the opposite bank. The villas and pavilions of long ago are no more, but the autumn here is no less magical than when it excited the divine wonder of poets which opens the eyes of other men. It still offers the priceless carmine of the autumn bay-leaves, the

red and purple bushes all shining with the rain like finest lacquer. Incomparable are the leaves in the last ecstasy of death which have fallen among the grasses! The water-plants spread out their long floating arms under the transparent glaze of the water. Dishwashers and wagtails hop along the bank beside me, their plumage radiantly clean, and finally, like an artist who has arranged the effect, this corner of nature, polished to high beauty, brought me to one of the rarest of rare delights, the sight of a kingfisher's noiseless skimming flight over the clear water like a streak of peacock-blue and turquoise and gold.

I landed and walked up to the *stûpa*. It was a large, solid octagonal tower, quite empty and wreathed with creepers. I went down again to a temple near at hand. Under the arcade on one side of the court big painted wooden fishes were lying. They are used as gongs. A *bonze* was lounging in the main chamber of the temple. Everything was redolent of the dreary idleness which rain brings in China. However, I wanted to go and visit a statue of the tenth century which stands at the entrance of a grotto a few miles from here, which I had come to know of, from an article by M. Henri Maspero in the *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*. Owing to the wet weather I could not get a guide to accompany me. I got directions as to the route as well as I could, and started down a road along the valley. Whenever I met a peasant I uttered the name of my destination hoping that my pronunciation would not make it incomprehensible. The man would listen, his honest peasant face would light up, he would point out the direction and off I would go again.

However, after passing several cross-roads, where I doubted having taken the right direction, I saw a perfectly enormous blue umbrella, coming towards me along the narrow paved road. The owner was poking it forward as he walked along. When I arrived in front of this canvas tortoise, I pulled it on one side to discover the

human part of it. What a typical Chinese face! It was a brisk old man with a thin white imperial, his face creased with wrinkles, and every wrinkle smiled! We exchanged courtesies. I pronounced the name of my elusive destination and as he made a sketchy gesture, and looked vague I judged that I had taken the wrong road. But I made the mistake, of insisting, of repeating the word more loudly, and convinced from this that it would not be polite to contradict me, the old man began to agree with me and to encourage me. When we parted he turned round again to make some additional bows. He was a noble old fellow. In my own country one may often meet his like, good old men who are unwearying in courtesy and benignity, the finest flower of a vast civilisation that they know nothing about.

When my pleasure in this encounter was dissipated, I had to confess to myself that I was lost. After several more mistakes I came at last to the opening of a grotto in the mountain-side. There stood the statue that I sought. As a statue it does not rise above mediocrity, and you may see better sculpture at the doorways of our country churches. But to represent Kuan-yinn is in itself a great undertaking. She is the Hindu *Avalokitesvara* one of the *Bodhisatvas*, beings who are completely purified, having completed the long, long series of their existences. Ready to enter *Nirvana*, they defer their bliss, so long as other beings suffer, and by a sublime action of charity, though it only depends on themselves to take the last step to bliss, they wait on the threshold, for the sake of others.

Kuan-yinn is the most compassionate of all the *Bodhisatvas*. "Where even a fly is suffering, there will I be," she says. The *Bodhisatvas* have no definite sex, but artists have given a feminine appearance to the figure of Kuan-yinn. There are some glorious statues of her, particularly among the Japanese images of the seventh and eigth centuries; also among the ancient paintings of China, such as the Kuan-yinn of the Kyoto

Museum. She is there depicted as divine, and also a great lady, not so much adorned by her many jewels, as by the nobleness of her gaze, where compassion blends perfectly with serenity. Pity seems to descend upon us from her, as from a star.

The statue of this grotto merely represented a stout personage who looked both stupid and affected, with a flat face and an empty smile. It is curious to see how the spirit fled from Chinese sculpture in very early days. One would say that this art in its decline is the first to announce the decline of a race for it is more closely bound up with matter and less narrowly individual than the other arts. Poetry and painting blossomed under the Sungs, incomparable works were produced in ceramics, but though the tree was in glorious full florescence the decadence of sculpture betrayed that the roots had begun to die.

At last I saw the pale glimmer of the canals again, the little bridges, like slender crescent moons, and then the lake. The light filtered tremulously through the mist. A whole parliament of magpies were shouting themselves hoarse on a dead tree. I was soaked by the rain, but I forgot to feel chilly in my participation in the joy of the plants. I rescued a drowning butterfly as the boat drew near the hotel once more. It was of the most delicate grey, covered with tiny specks, the image of those which flutter, like souls, through the paintings of the Sung Dynasty. I took it into my room and dried it as tenderly as I was able. On close inspection I quite forgot that the species was common in my admiration of all that was rare and lovely in itself, its long feelers, fragile body and filmy wings. But—oh, butterfly! What folly to venture into this cruel world with that equipment!

In the afternoon the weather cleared. The sun came out, but his rays could not find anything great or significant to fall on, in the banal town which has replaced the incomparable city of Antiquity. The sunshine revealed the landscape whose beauties are famous, but concentrated

into so narrow a scope that you feel that you must hold in your enthusiasm in order that it may not all be gone in the first few glances. Opposite the town there are mountains with wreathes of mist rolling about them, which are called the "Mountains which flew hither," because they recall to pious pilgrims the mountains of a sacred place in India.

You may find sculpture in the rock there, like those of Yun-Kan and of Long-Men, but these only date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They are votive images created there for the faithful at their own expense, in order to preserve human dignity in their future lives, or to aid and promote the reincarnation of one of their departed. Sometimes they are simply dedicated to the good of all living creatures.

Vowed entirely to Buddhism the country round Hang-Tcheou is impregnated with it. Near the temples there are fish-ponds full of happy fish who will never know the temptation of the bait or the cruelty of the hook, and parks full of happy beasts who will live, until they die a natural death.

Buddhism softens all hearts in Asia, like Christianity, when it is real, in Europe. Buddhism has been able to thaw the Chinese soul. It has made a stainless knight of the Japanese warrior, a poet of the sword who blends his asceticism with culture. In both countries it has raised art to sublimity. Although it renders appearances transparent to the eyes of Sages, and delivers them from Illusion through Knowledge, it cannot bring so much intense light to simpler creatures of far less mental power. But its gentleness and sweetness permeates every being which submits to it. It extinguishes that revolt of the ignorant, naughty child which is the spirit of the modern world, by the grandeur of its doctrine of a succession of existences. Nothing veils the depths of existence, and even the beauties of the universe so completely from man as the artless bitterness of social demands and rivalries. Under their domination, the

most commonplace possessions, the vilest pleasures, which under the eye of Oriental contemplation fade from all reality, become everything to man, the unique and adored object, coveted by multitudes.

Compare this miserable deception with the depth of the doctrine which refers every man to his moral being, warning him to find his own happiness in himself, or to live unhappy. At the same time Buddhism envelops all living creatures in a fraternity which does not leave one outside, since all are committed to the same tests, and not one is so fallen that he has not the same chance as every other of dragging himself up to deliverance at last. In such a conception of the world no creature can lack significance.

Flowers are the illumination of the vast surface of existences; the appearances; and a bird singing its heart out in the twilight is joy to the soul of a contemplator, rising into soul-ecstasy. This doctrine is priceless to tender hearts. It justifies the universal love that they feel. As I was dreaming on in this way a little fluttering object passed before my eyes and went out into the great arch of heaven and was swallowed up in the indefinable. It was my butterfly flying away.

CHAPTER IV

If you want to study the clash of ancient and modern China go to Canton. Formerly it was here that the traveller halted on the threshold of Great China, on arriving from the voluptuous South which is easier for a foreigner to absorb and understand, or at any rate, on the surface, it is so.

In Canton, nothing at first seemed to repel him. And yet he was ignored rather than admitted, people brushed past him rather than perceived him, until quite nullified in the depths of indifferent crowds he began to wonder whether he had been civilly received or courteously shown to the door. Absolutely everything was redolent of courteous denial, from the faces of the passers-by to the floating folds of silk robes and the smooth, glossy surface of lacquer panels. Feeling coarse, awkward and intimidated, the traveller blundered against the sleek mystery of the Chinese soul whichever way he turned.

The modern spirit is now fermenting more actively at Canton than elsewhere. The dominating young Chinamen are those who have returned from visiting the United States, and there are no more determined agitators in China than these. Tall, modern houses are rising fast along the river banks. The ramparts have been levelled with the ground. However, the main block of the old town still stands, cut into sections by straight streets compressed so closely together that they give one the feeling of being indoors, and seem like an infinite number of corridors in an immense palace. Heaps of vegetables make vivid patches in the dim shadows; carp, split open, and bordered by a red thread of coagulated blood lie in a little water at the bottom of a

pail; under a trellis I saw the writhing of those fleshy snakes on which the Chinese regale themselves. Painters of funeral portraits hang out specimens of their work in their shop-fronts, faces as expressionless and unrevealing as the face of every passer-by. Sometimes a little cavalcade flashes out among these colourless people, a cavalcade of little boys and girls dressed as stage princes and princesses, mounted on bay or white ponies. You catch a passing glimpse of crafty little faces heavily rouged, under the masses of rosettes and tufts on their heads, and they seem to carry all the light out of these streets as they pass out of sight.

Suddenly (and it is like getting out of doors) I came out into the wide, squalid, colourless *boulevards* where it seems as if all the colour and intimate life of the old town had been bled away. Everything in this part of the town is modern and vulgar. There was actually a stupid, incongruous merry-go-round of wooden horses, here in this country of superfine, mysterious pleasure. The most important buildings on the quays are the bazaars which blaze with useless illumination every night. Industrial manufacture loads them with shoddy and commonplace articles. Yet everybody shops there, even the naïve Lama, from far away, who carries off utensils absolutely redolent of the hostile spirit of another world, never suspecting his own imprudence. The lifts go up and down, the nasal gramophones bray their vulgarity into the eastern air. A whole population of loungers wanders about in this insipid tasteless region where Asia has shed her glory.

Very little that is really characteristic survives even in the old streets. You may visit all the fan-shops and not find one worth looking at. A few small crafts still struggle to preserve their existence like the last dancing spurts of flame from the candle-ends of an illumination which is over. I often visited a stall where a young man made costume-dolls out of a few bits of stuff and tinsel, and the creatures that he fashioned were like brilliant, scintillating

actors who seemed to represent the infinitely subtle and complicated soul of old China. His skill in workmanship was absolutely mechanical, and when I went to ask him for more dolls like those I had bought the day before, he turned a vacant, dreamy face on me as if he did not remember ever having sold anything to me. He did his work in a dream.

These changes on the surface announce the existence of new reality in the depths. The people of Canton have always been distinguished from the rest of China by a more restless and mobile spirit. It was here that the famous Sun Yat-sen declared himself as the man who represented Young China in the eyes of Europe and America, and he retained that position until the day when his eagerness in accepting a place offered him by Yuan cheu Kaï opened every one's eyes to his true nature.

Each succeeding government of Canton is more lavish of promises than the last, and if they have not yet done much for the nation, they have certainly had a voice in every serious debate. They take up the idea of any showy reform quite by chance. For instance, they introduced the co-education of boys and girls, which had very bad results.

The old spirit of intrigue carries on just as usual under the modern developments which are displayed. It is related of a Marshal of Kouang-si, the neighbouring province, that his bedside book is a history of the three realms, for he is searching it for methods of trickery and ruse used in the manifold disorders of the past, in order that he may apply them profitably to the present.

Trading has become so difficult that it is almost impossible. The great merchants stood by the *ancien régime*. When that fell, they took refuge in Hong-Kong, and no matter what pressure is put upon them to return, they can never make up their minds to do so. These successive governments are all the more dangerous to

the merchants because, owing to the shortness of their existence, the traders must feather their nests very rapidly. Moreover, the merchant class has remained much addicted to opium. It is in vain that they are promised that they shall not be meddled with on this point; they know perfectly well that the denunciation of an enemy or the spite of a subordinate would expose them to endless molestation. The men who have replaced them in Canton have not preserved the professional integrity which made the reputation of Chinese merchants.

Nothing so quickly corrupts private persons as permanent public disorder. If the great main example of honesty and regularity is removed, individuals soon adopt the habit of living as they please. The new type of merchant often adopts an absurd assumed name, and as if to mock at the foreign customer, who is too ignorant to translate them, he composes them from the names of the most edifying virtues. And when the day of reckoning comes it is announced that Mr Perfect Loyalty has not fulfilled any of his contracts, and that Mr Unimpeachable Honesty has discreetly quitted the town.

This sort of thing must bring one to regret the days of the Empire, and indeed the most industrious and honest men of the nation do regret them. And yet, according to the opinion of keen observers, a Restoration of the Empire has no chance of lasting, or of being accepted by the whole of China if it did take place. This is so undoubtedly true that the agitators of the South, feeling that they are isolated for the moment, are giving the Northern generals insidious encouragement to attempt a Restoration, for they would only have to declare themselves against it, to find all the forces of Young China at their backs.

The Chinese are extremely sensitive to fashion and opinion, and in spite of all the inconveniences they are suffering, they have come to look upon the Imperial rule as quite out of date, and to feel that it would be

humiliating to return to it. For that matter it is only the same wave of change which has passed over Europe and has now reached Asia. Authority has lost the support of religion here as in the Occident, and even if the Emperor were restored to his throne, his subjects could not be restored as they once were. The utilitarian element in life can be patched up, but sacred things are not to be mended with glue.

Much as Japan differs from China the same wave of change is passing over it. The divine sun of Empire so long isolated in the inaccessible heights, is beginning to sink and before so very long will set in the human tide. Secret and unremitting toilers are at work under this changing surface. There are Bolshevist newspapers in Canton, as there are in all the large towns. The coolie, the boatman and the peasant all study the pictures in them and read the short inscriptions underneath, and the sophism which explains all their misfortunes in two words becomes crystallised in their brains.

Let us remember what rebellion in China may mean if we want to understand how successful Bolshevism or any other form of excess may become here. As a fire sweeps through the serried ranks of the native wooden hovels from one burst of its appalling energy, so in this race, where there is no effective separation between individuals, one mad idea inflames countless multitudes simultaneously. There are numerous examples of these outbursts of frenzy in Chinese history up to the Boxer riots, and even since then. In 1912, in the province of Se-Tchuen, a man named Tchou proclaimed that he was a descendant of the Mings, and therefore had a right to the throne. He collected thousands of partisans in a few days and various secret societies gave him their support.

And now the condition of the people goes from bad to worse, the suffering that they endure alienates them more every day from the principles which they used to associate with government. Into the bargain, the soldiers are

ready for any violent measures. And Bolshevists discover the best material for making the little despots necessary to their tyranny in the thousands of students with "swelled heads" and envious hearts.

There is, of course, no lack of people who desire to restore order. The general who is the present Governor of Canton, who took the town from the troops from Yunnan a fortnight ago, belongs to that genus. He has long been given to political intrigue, even to the point of risking his life for it, and he is regarded as a thoroughly trustworthy sensible man, who, instead of wasting his energy in theories, wishes to put the government of the province on a thoroughly good footing before anything else is done. I have met a man who works under him, a young man of great energy, who has spent four years in France to study agriculture near Toulouse and would have stayed there longer if he had not been recalled to China to join in the struggle against Yuan cheu Kaï. As he has lived so long in our country he has seen with his own eyes that there is no other whose influence is freer of self-interest or of peril to others. He offered to secure me an interview with the Governor, and I accepted with pleasure.

Not because these interviews generally lead to anything useful. It is obvious that the man who is being interviewed is not going to give away the smallest secret to a stranger, add to that the fearful inconvenience of expressing oneself through an interpreter, and it is a wonder if the two interlocutors can succeed in exchanging any reasonable conversation at all. Nothing but the most depressing banalities are in fact exchanged.

My introducer led me into a large, light room where we were soon joined by the General. Conversation goes slowly in Asia, and no one is afraid of silences. I had all the more leisure for my observation of the Governor. It was a typical Chinese head, as if rough-hewn from hard stone with very little detail. He carries his head pushed forward, his eye is veiled, his moustache straggling, and his lower lip hangs down. Sometimes he laughs with

that sudden laugh which is more of a cackle than a burst of merriment. It begins suddenly and ends suddenly. Behind the expressionless caution of his face you can detect the existence of common sense, sagacity and acute powers of observation.

He began to talk about Yuan cheu Kaï as eagerly as if that personage were only just dead. According to the General all the sufferings of China are due to his ideas and personality. This opinion accords with others that I have heard, which gave me to understand that Yuan was a reactionary who revived the abuses of the last years of the Empire. No doubt the old adventurer knew what he was about in dealing with his compatriots. He handled corruption with a magisterial confidence. But like many realists, he could only take hold of reality where it is thickest and most obvious. He thought he had done enough when he had bought over a few high personages, but he was not able to suppress the new forces working against his influence in that way.

The conversation then took a different turn and was switched off on to the subject of the number of students which this province sends to France, where they are maintained half at the expense of the municipal authority of their native places and half at the expense of their families. The General assured me that to judge from their letters they seem to be very contented, and for the most part they behave well and work hard.

I asked him what their studies were. It appears that they generally go in for Applied Sciences. I was glad to hear that, for as I said to the General, the better it is proved that this form of study is valuable, the more obvious it becomes that those who meddle with everything without following it up with action and application, run the risk of only learning to be irrational.

The General signified his agreement, but the next moment he said that France, being the country of great inventors, the Chinese students would be able to learn not only the practice but the theory of the sciences, so

that in their turn they might become inventors when they came home. Can one *learn* to be an inventor? But I restrained myself from offering any discouragement to the good General's hopes.

At last the Governor came to his own projects. He was of opinion that all too ambitious schemes on an impossibly vast scale must be sacrificed to the possibility of actually accomplishing some restoration of decent regularity. He wants first to set Kouang-toung in order and perhaps to make one province of it, joined to Kouang-si, for economically the two provinces are one. If the Republic is to have any real existence in China, he said, it must first be successfully established in some model province, and according to him, the geographical position, the state of the people's minds, and the economic position has predestined the region of Canton to play this exemplary part.

While he was dealing with this subject and pointing out the part France might play in the association of the two provinces, it was impossible not to respond to the excellent sense of his ideas and the courageousness of his intentions. If only the mischief-makers would let him alone to work out his ideas in peace! Chinese politics, like those of other countries, are full of people who have lost all power of useful action themselves, and accordingly put all their energies into hindering other people. Such, then, was the famous Sun Yat-sen who had only returned to Canton a few days before and was already a power in the land.

At Canton I took a last look at the work of our missionaries. I had already met many Jesuit missionaries. Most of them, as is only natural, are chiefly interested in their own furrows. But there are others who take a longer view, and there is no one more valuable to the traveller than these men from the point of view of gaining information. Among the French priests, all belonging to the *Societé des*

Missions Etrangères, who live in the South of China, three in particular, stand out in my memory.

One is Father Robert of Hong-Kong, one of the strongest and clearest minds of the Far East. I do not think you could meet a better example of the extent of knowledge of the Chinese soul which can exist in a mind which has lost none of its firm Occidental qualities.

Another, is the Apostolic Vicar of Canton, Monseigneur de Guébriant. He has spent all his adult life in Se-Tchuen converting not only the Chinese, but also an aboriginal race, the Lo-Lo, who are such savages that no white man before him had succeeded in penetrating their territory. His experience of China is unrivalled, and he has just completed it by the journey he has made from South to North as apostolic visitor. In him I saw at its highest and strongest the friendly predilection for the nature of the Chinese which exists in so many French missionaries.

And then, finally, I have a very special memory of Father Fourquet, assistant vicar, a most wise and charming being who loves the country of his adoption without having severed himself from the country of his birth, and thus presents a happy combination of the best elements in both. While he was talking over the present and the future of China with me he made me feel involuntarily that the affinity between China and France really does exist by the ease and sympathy with which he discussed both points of view, and showed a surface of polished urbanity superimposed upon his solid, country-bred character.

Sometimes as we went about together in the city we would go into a temple and once we found a poor man on his knees before the great gilded idol, and I shall not easily forget the pensive, indulgent, almost fraternal glance which the missionary gave him ; one felt that he joined in the supplicant's prayer in spite of the difference of ritual. A missionary of this sort is a really noble type of man, with an admirably open mind, whose experience

has had no effect but that of broadening his love and charity, a man who is only severe to himself. I was delighted to meet such connoisseurs of the Chinese soul and nature. If I ever alluded to the impression of callousness which the Chinese had made upon me in my dealings with them, Monseigneur de Guébriant would never agree with me, and to alter my opinion he went so far as to relate some of the intimate details of his life and work here, which otherwise I should never have heard, for he was inviolably discreet on the subjects of the risks he had run. As he regretfully told me one of his adventures I saw his face (where something of the subtlety of a mandarin was combined with the dreamy expression of the Bretons) grow soft and tender; the details of his past, on which he dwelt, were not the innumerable risks, affronts and dangers he had experienced, but only those which could confirm him in his real love of the Chinese people.

Then he allowed me to give my opinion all the more indulgently because there was not the slightest danger of his sharing it. When I had finished, he simply repeated what he had said before: "Believe me," he said gently, "everything capable of winning love is in them."

One is never tired of discussing this question of Chinese sensibility because everyone feels that the quintessence of a national soul rests in its sensibility. After pondering the question for a long time I came to the conclusion that their sensibilities are only affected by matters pertaining to the interior of some social group, either of relations, friends or acquaintances, without extending into any region unknown to them. That is why the foreigner and the bird of passage considers them devoid of sensibility. Why should we be astonished by this indifference? The rites have trained them to absolute control of their emotions, and besides that, the individual is infinitely less important with them than with us. This springs from the fact that the population is always

in excess of its resources in China. If one man falls, well, at any rate there is one less mouth to feed.

Even in Europe we may notice the development of a new enmity which is in the process of hardening many hearts in proportion as life becomes more difficult and competition more and more keen. Man is not naturally pitiful. Whatever compassion exits in China has its origin in Buddhism, just as in Europe it is derived from Christianity.

The Catholic Missions cannot avoid feeling some of the force of evolution in China, and we must expect to see them lose more and more of their national character. It will always have to be admitted, however, that the propagation of Catholicism in China has been the work of French Catholics. The *Société des Missions Etrangères*, the Lazarist Fathers, and the French Jesuits are responsible for the conversion of three-quarters of the Chinese Catholics. The rest belong to missionaries of other nationalities. On the other hand, France does not demand untimely zeal or clandestine service from her priests. It is enough if they represent her worthily by their qualities and their virtues.

Far from being hampered in their apostolic work by their national attributes, they derive extra force from them, for the missionary spirit is part of the genius of their country as well as part of their own faith and fervour. France is a missionary country. I have already noticed the skill and justice with which the Chinese estimate the worth of foreigners resident among them. And they have the priests under their observation, not only for a term of years but for a whole lifetime. In a town like Canton, in the nature of things and because of the credit they have acquired, the priests are drawn into the main stream of business. A stream of wealth flows past them daily, and yet when the natives come to consult them they find them living in strict austerity in their bare class-rooms and refectories.

Hence their influence. The majority of the Chinese consider their own interests in everything, but they admire disinterestedness all the better on that account. They cannot help seeing that the only reward that the missionaries will accept is the gift of more trouble and more work. They rescue needy children and old people, and care for invalids and lepers, and the Government of Canton has lately put all the organisations for relief of distress into their hands. They carry ardour and faith into their work, but wherever they go they leave the trace of their French virtues, their subtlety and their judgment and their moral purity, and by all these, as well as the confident charm displayed in all their dealings, they are worthy representatives of France.

And, finally, they render us another service of incalculable value, they preserve the use of our language in China. It is difficult to imagine how bitterly the battle of the different tongues is waged ! Each country makes violent efforts to exclude its rivals. English is almost absolute in the Far East, to such an extent that French Banks so far forget themselves as to send out documents to French customers in that language. It is, therefore, easily understood how hard it is to persuade the Chinese to take the trouble to learn French. There are, however, several reasons why it should be recommended to them. Some of them already feel the attraction of our country, and propose to complete their education there. It would be much better for everybody concerned if they would come to France already knowing something of the language. To tell the truth, it will hardly be possible to keep the language alive in China unless our economic position improves. We must try to hold out until then, and in order to succeed, any help that can be given, must be given to those who are supporting the existence of the French language in China. The Government of Hong-Kong has made a grant of eighty thousand dollars a year to the Protestant College of Canton. The only establishment in Canton where our language can be

taught is the college of the Marist Brothers, and they get no help from anyone.

If there is one quality common to all the best type of Frenchman which is always found in those scattered about the world, it is a disinterested curiosity which makes them interested in matters outside their special jurisdiction. Nearly all our consuls in the Far East have that characteristic; not only are they zealous in their own posts, but their taste for learning and research makes them keen observers of the life around them, and this is the more meritorious because they are not provided with subordinates and are often overwhelmed with duties which should not be laid upon them.

The love of learning which is the inestimable legacy of a superior civilisation can nowhere be better indulged than in China. Faced by a world alien to your own you may seek in vain to master its secrets by attacking the surface of them. You must travel up to the very source of the art, thought and history and descend from that vantage-point to the appearances. Our knowledge of ancient China becomes amplified every day, and it is all the more susceptible of extension now that public opinion in China has been won over to approve of research if you know how to approach the authorities. The consequences of these researches in archæology and palæontology are incalculable. The very origin of the Chinese may be brought to light. Unheard-of, undreamt-of arts will be revealed, and unknown epochs will be brought back to human consciousness.

Asia is waiting for men of research, from the North of Siberia to the South of India. There is as much to be discovered under the crust of the world as there was once to be discovered on its surface. A new type of scholar is arising for the new epics of research, and far from being the prisoner of his books, he will be free of all lands, all seas, all horizons, and will scour the world from end to end, an Argonaut of learning.

France has always been eminent in the region of Chinese research since the days of the pioneer Jesuits to Fathers Doré, Couvreur and Wieger; since Rémusat and Stanislas Julien to Chavannes, Pelliot and Granet. We must not forget the students of the French School in the Far East, of whom several have already made their mark in this subject, by explorations which have cost some of them their lives. But if researches of this kind are to be effectively carried out, they must be properly equipped. The Americans are preparing an expedition which has been magnificently endowed, and is to spend several years in China. Here, again, we shall be wiped out if we cannot contrive to raise enough money.

When a Frenchman travels it is brought home to him sharply that France *must* redeem her economic position, and that as quickly as possible, not only to safeguard herself against material extinction, but also to keep her soul and intellect alive in the world at large. If we can only regain the financial position we have lost, we must unlearn the habit of niggardliness, and learn to spend, with method, but also with wise profusion.

CHAPTER V

I LEFT Canton one warm afternoon in December, and went on board the steamer by which I was to travel. I sat gazing along the river. The water was furrowed in every direction by the movements of boats propelled by women who stand up in the bows like a gondolier. Junks were passing up and down river, and some of them were like great wooden cases daubed with paint, overcrowded with people, and drawn by fussy, panting little tugs attached to their sides.

The dream-like changing surfaces of great luminous sails, which looked as if they had been painted with one sweep of the brush, glided through this scene of agitated movement like councillors of peace. Only a few steel boats, like the one I was travelling on, made a contrast by their keen, sharp outlines with the general stamp of the wooden craft, for everything else afloat on the river had the smooth, round forms and melting contours of wood.

We started. We were some time passing out of the town stretching along the flat river banks, but finally we left it behind, and had well-cultivated fields on either side. Evening came on. In the twilight, shapes were flattened and simplified. A pagoda rose up flat against the sky between trees which seemed to have no volume. We passed a village which was holding its hovels up on piles, much as a huge spider gathers her legs close under her body. Then we came to some little warships at their anchorage, flat silhouettes glued against the neutral background of the dusk. It was a Chinese military flotilla. They would have made charming toys, or, in the twilight, looked as if they would. A huge junk came silently

past them, cleaving the water. Already a lantern threw out its beams from her noiseless prow.

The distant hills were now no more than a succession of soft, round mounds, sketched in liquid black lacquer against the orange background of the sunset. In proportion as earth became dim and effaced, the sky became more and more potent with a sort of cold fascination, affirming its august authority over the landscape. This is the exquisite hour between day and night, when the particular is lost in the universal, when the details which were enough to divert us during the day, retire like mummers with their itinerant stage properties to give place to the great permanent players, Water, Sky and Earth. And the traveller, too, is able to unburden himself of triviality. He is now no more than a soul in space, a human mirror suspended in divine, cool silence, reflecting all things, in a wondering and tranquil ecstasy.

What a strange little place is Macao! If it were not for the dull ochre colour of the sea which dispels the illusion you would take it for a Portuguese town, stretched out on its peninsula, the houses "touched up" with different pale tints, and churches which look as if they belonged to stage scenery. There is a short promenade along the quay where the inhabitants come out to show themselves to each other, like a stage-crowd of supers.

Already this morning I have seen officers parading up and down, and the governor's wife has driven by, throwing an impartial glance first to the right, and then to the left.

I climbed the steep paved streets, where names of overpowering length and complexity inscribed on sign-boards and escutcheons seem to make the silence reverberate with a sonorous note. The light was exquisitely pure and pale and fresh, and I made haste to feast my eyes before this little world was faded by the noon.

I went into a huge white church, where some old women

with bronzed face, wearing mantillas, were muttering their orisons. I went out again, and a little further on I came to the small buildings of a Buddhist Temple, where the cult was also being mechanically celebrated. There were rags and fans hung on to branches, joss-sticks were smoking, a priest was chanting in deep monotone before a child Buddha dressed up and bedizened like the images in a Spanish church. All ancient religions have a gentle charm. I came back along the quay, where the fishermen live, which recalls the inner harbour at Taranto, by its position and aspect. The acrid smell of dried fish is very apparent, children were running about, and you noticed the thud of their bare feet. A junk put out to sea amidst an explosion of fire-crackers.

In this way I came back into the straight and modern main street, which divides the town into two. It was full of the establishments of dentists and photographers, and in the windows of the latter you see dismal representations of Chinese ladies, whose bracelets, necklaces and rings are touched up with a bright yellow tint to make them more important, and possibly to represent gold.

Chinamen passed by turning away their faces, as void of expression as a blank slate. A gross-looking half-breed thrust his face forward towards me.

All the houses are gay with colour-wash, and one of them, the *Santa Casa della Misericordia*, is almost coquettish with its salmon-coloured walls relieved with white trellis-work. The facile and rather hollow amplitude of Southern European architecture is to be seen everywhere. A blue and white church in the upper town has the distorted lines of an enormous chest of drawers. The buildings of the Seminary are adjacent to it, and the Portuguese Fathers took me over them with all the courtesy of great gentlemen.

From every point of vantage in this colour-washed town you get a view of a scowling black *façade* standing out against the sky, which is all that remains of the first cathedral built in the sixteenth century, and almost

entirely destroyed by fire. Seen close at hand this *façade* is like the sombre frontispiece of an ancient book. There are strange figures in bas-relief upon it, the Sun and the Moon, a skeleton, a devil, a fountain and a palm-tree. You see a caravel streaming over the Beast of the Apocalypse. A large bronze Holy Spirit stretches across the pediment in the poise of a bird of prey. Four severely military statues of concentrated gloom stand at the level of the first floor : they are St Francis Xavier, St Francis of Borgia, St Francis Regis, and St Ignatius.

It was at Macao that Europeans first set foot in China. French missionaries used to land there later, and when, with great difficulty, they had obtained leave from the Spanish Bishop to go on into the interior, they made their journeys as eels are wont to do, moving on by night and lying concealed by day, until they reached their distant mission-fields. Macao was a great port in those days, but since then it has been supplanted by Hong-Kong, and now this little parent town, which has an atmosphere of transplanted sub-prefecture about it, only subsists as a capital of human passions. Things which are carefully hidden in other places, are carelessly flaunted here. Opium vendors hang out their signs in the streets, and if you look in at the doorways you can see the bare rooms and hard, ascetic beds where the opium smokers taste the voluptuous joy of their poison.

Every quarter of the town is filled with gambling-houses which blaze with lights every night for their patrons. All Asiatics are gamblers, but particularly the Chinese, and still more particularly the Southern Chinese. The heroes of the Ramayana even were passionately addicted to dicing, and though we are ignorant of the particulars of their system, it was apparently on the same principle as the game which is played here to-day.

In the gambling-hall stands a long table with a heap at one end, of the usual currency of China, a nickel coin with square hole in the middle called a cash. When the moment comes, an absent-minded Chinaman seated at

the table scoops away a smaller heap from the larger one, and immediately covers it with a metal bowl. When the stakes are placed, he lifts up the bowl and begins to count out the cash, four at a time, with a long pointer. There may be a complete number of sets of four in the pile, or there may be one, two, or three cash left over. This is the chance that the gamblers put their stakes on.

Gamblers of recognised social existence assemble on the first floor, in a balcony which overlooks the gaming-table. They are served with tea and cigarettes, and suck pumpkin seeds while they make their wagers. When their choice is made a little basket on a string is let down with their money in it, and a shrill voice announces the number that it is to be staked on. You see a good many women in these places, fat women for the most part, unbecomingly attired in their usual jumpers and black silk trousers. A thin, bent old man beside me with drooping eyelids had that false air of good breeding which distinguishes habitual suitors of Fortune in our own Casinos.

Down below, the working people stood round the table in a crowd. They come in and watch the play for a few minutes, clutching the few hard-earned coins that they hope to multiply exceedingly by grace of the unknown power. Suddenly they make up their minds, stretch out their arms and place their stakes. The croupier at the end of the table has the same look of perpetual boredom that European croupiers have. Finally he uncovers the heap of " cash " that he has put on one side, and begins to count them out deliberately four at a time. There is a dead silence. When the end draws near so that the result can be foreseen, a thin murmur runs through the crowd. When the result is announced they receive it in silence. Theirs is not the well-bred, imperturbability of the first-floor gamblers. It is rather a dumb submission to Fate, the adoration of poor wretches for a god who drives over them with crushing wheels.

CHAPTER VI

English force; English organisation; in other words, Hong-Kong. Junks seem like boats from another epoch beside all these great vessels which are the lines of communication of the whole world. Boats as square as a packing-case with a rag for a sail, and the claws of an anchor showing at the prow, also pass across the harbour with a whole family in each of them, a mass of human creatures whose yellow faces are hardly to be distinguished from their rags. The town comes to an end at the quays with a row of uniform houses, which the straight streets divide into solid blocks.

Soft rain clouds hide the hill-tops, trail down and subside to the sea level. Sometimes they are lifted like a stage curtain here and there and reveal incomplete theatrical views of the upper town above the busy clamour of the port. You may thus catch sight of a white palace standing deserted on a slope embowered in trees.

A little further off you see the anchorage of the British warships which police all this traffic of the sea-ways. The ships on the China station are mostly light cruisers, designed for speed, simplified in form and with a gliding look which proclaims their mobility. Sometimes it has occurred to France that she, too, should be represented by a vessel or two. Then, heralded by a heavy cloud of smoke, a confused and complicated silhouette hoists itself slowly over the horizon, looking rather like a fortified castle gone to sea, and finally turns out to be a broken-winded French cruiser which has been navigating the China Seas for the last fifteen years. It is not the fault of her crew or her officers who are excellent, zealous, and keen on their profession, no other navy can boast of

better officers or men, but one can well believe that they are not very keen on exhibiting themselves mounted on a pedestal of that description.

Nothing is more important than the type of ship which represents a nation abroad. They are not only the evidence of the nation's power, but examples of her industries and, indeed, must stand as an image of each nation which she displays to others. One could wish that France would disseminate much better portraits of herself.

Hong-Kong is built in terraces up the mountain-side, and instantly betrays to the eye the hierarchy which the English establish wherever they dominate. The Chinese population swarms like insects on the lowest level, the children quite innumerable, the women dressed in black, with their heads bound round with a black handkerchief, and one is relieved to observe their unmutilated feet moving freely in straw sandals, well-shaped, strong-looking feet, of the tint of yellow marble rather like Italian peasants. Above this comes the business and hotel quarter. Then the villas of the upper town with their gardens running up to meet the forest.

Just as I arrived up there late in the afternoon, the peak was emerging from the clouds, and I saw the shining rails of the funicular railway hanging like slack ropes amongst the surrounding verdure. The scorching rays of the sinking sun made the sea appear almost blue.

Close to me the large, delicate scarlet petals of poinsettias exhaled their force of colour like splendid fanfares through the moist air ; a banyan-tree leaned on its many crutches, and a little further off two other trees, one blooming with flowers of a precious yellow, the other with flowers of a mystical mauve, could be imagined as nets for catching the whole number of butterflies that one species or another contains. The English have re-wooded the slopes of the mountain, and the traveller returning from the stark lands of China is filled with delicious relief on plunging his whole being into the

enjoyment of luxuriant vegetation again. The green mountain-side is covered with the façades of white villas. Well set-up and perfectly turned out, warrant officers and marines go swinging by with that equable stride which nothing ever throws out of step, the same stride with which they walk indifferently through every town in the world.

Then the traveller hears light, airy voices with such a coolness in them that the owners seem positively unaware that they live in a sweltering climate. They are the voices of some young Englishwomen whom he passes. After so many months among darkies, the traveller's eye cannot but seize, embrace and adore the sight of a blonde woman.

The life here is typically English, proud, intact and cut off from the elements that it dominates. It would be easy to reproach the Anglo-Saxons with their haughtiness to the races that they regard as inferior, and to contrast the rather dull, though healthy, simplicity of so many of them, and their robust health free from nervous complications, with the ambiguous secretiveness, the specious richness of mind and intellectual being, and the superfine taste of those whom they are pleased to disdain. There is no doubt all the same if we look further into the question, that the Anglo-Saxons have rendered a signal service to civilisation, not only by maintaining the *prestige* of the white man all the world over, but by guarding the unmixed purity of their race, so far as is humanly possible. If they have regulated the matter with considerable harshness, we should consider that, under certain circumstances, the whole force of nature urges this undesirable blending of race, and that it can only be repressed by stern measures.

But one can only contemplate the idea of a civilisation consisting of half-breeds, with disgust. Disgust also we must feel at the debasement of soul and confusion of mind which would underlie the bombastic jabber of half-known languages, hideously confused. Races ought

to be well acquainted with one another, but they should not mix. The idea of cross-breeding is repugnant to the nobler types of every race. And even if this nameless hotch-potch, only fit to boil in a witch's cauldron is destined to appear, one is nevertheless permitted to assign better ends to humanity, until that evil day arrives, if it ever does.

BOOK V

THE RETURN

CHAPTER I

The journey down from Hong-Kong towards the equator is one succession of gorgeous pageants. In proportion as he gets further and further from the starved, exhausted landscapes of China, the traveller sees Nature coming to her full powers again, rioting in the wealth of her most luxuriant vegetation. It finds the same opulence of Nature at every port that the ship puts into; for instance, in the magnificent Botanical and Zoological Gardens, with their superb caged beasts, snarling tigers fresh from the jungle, where they were so recently free to roam, and that great, thinking mass, which we call the elephant, who looks as if his wisdom must be as weighty as himself.

The aviaries are filled with the flutterings of motley birds, with plumage either absurdly gorgeous, or ravishing in the delicacy of the colour scheme. Not far off is the cold, gem-like beauty of the snakes. Orchids in that damp atmosphere have the strange, mystical look of under-water plants, and flowering trees fill the air with scents so sweet and heavy that one can almost feed on them

Men, too, are affected by the languorous heat, and yield to it. The further south you go the larger the flowers become, and the people's eyes. It is true that work goes on in the streets as it did further north; shopkeepers drive bargains, bearers and artisans are toiling, but already you notice man's superiority to his task which is the supreme grace of India.

The blessed sight of beauty which has no definite use meets the eye, and the magnificent joy which beauty takes of itself, smiles out of everything once more. An

overflowing stream of beauty spreads out over everything like the transparent water over the pebbles at the bottom of a river-bed. Escaping from the close confinement of Chinese rectitude, attitude and gesture become natural and lovely because free. See that youth's gesture uncoiling its strange Oriental beauty to his very fingertips like a snake writhing out to its full length !

The ampler blouses and fuller trousers of the Indo-Chinese women make an agreeable change after the scanty garments of female China. But what are they even, compared to the saffron veils, the draperies of tender violet and rose-flushed white, which seem to wrap the Hindu women in clouds of ethereal dawn ?

The two races confront each other at Singapore and meet with a shock like two great rivers ; from one direction, the Chinese, methodically industrious, plainly-garbed, with their full, downright faces, their one gilded altar, their funeral tablets and their formal reverence to a rigid cult. From the other direction, the Hindhus, worshippers of innumerable deities, with their suave and subtle features, their gorgeous draperies, their eyes glowing with mild brilliance like holy lamps, and their faces lighted up by the dazzling whiteness of their teeth. Their eyes are the most wonderful point they have. They are all full of the same coaxing treachery of the Orient, and one pair of eyes does not belong to one individual, any more than to another, and does not reveal the personal drama of one being. They are like jewels which Nature has flung out to a whole race with a prodigal hand, or, looking at a row of Hindhus at the edge of a crowd, you might say that their eyes are like those chains of fire, the lights of a city ashore, seen from the sea as the ship draws near the land, the lights which announce one's coming to an unknown world.

CHAPTER II

Then a memory of great, arid China forces its way into the traveller's mind, China with its undoubted ascendancy and unexplained power of attraction which are those of a finished civilisation and a completely egoistical world.

How well I can visualise the long, straight streets, cut straight as an arrow with booths and shops on each side and the seething crowds of heads, and the cages full of singing birds hanging over the crowds, a sign of the childlike element in this bizarre community. And the great Chinese characters inscribed everywhere which seem like a different sort of cage, cages with such solid, heavy bars that it is difficult to see or hear evidence of a live idea inside them, not so much as a chirp, or the flirt of a tail-feather ! How well I can remember my wearied impatience, in my disappointed examination of those evasive faces, that multitude of faces without a spark of self-revelation in them, faces like those exquisite closed boxes, where not a crack reveals the secret of the opening How well I remember the sumptuous nightmare of the Chinese theatre ; the shrill-voiced actors, dressed as women, and their *macabre* attraction, which is so far from live human charm that it made me think of fossilised plants.

And then there is the studied, even laboured refinement of Chinese cookery which is certainly not to be ignored. And I remember how the guests round the table used to look like great batrachians, and how strange was the furtive murmur of welcome which ran through them when another guest came in : " Ten thousand years, ten thousand, ten thousand years !"

And these memories do not come to me without regret, when I think of the higher types of the Chinese soul, of the unknown men of culture buried in little towns, or of the great Taoist priests in their magnificent monastic libraries, whose minds travel silently through depths that few of their fellows can even conceive of, to the ultimate point which man's speculations on the universe have reached. These are the men, whom I passionately long to know, and I never even met them to speak to. And how can I be surprised at that ? Europeans sojourning in China, being what they usually are, how could these poets and sages feel anything about them, but that a very great impassable gulf separates these foreigners from themselves. In order to approach them, you would have to consecrate your whole life to the effort.

Let the bird of passage never forget that these ancient empires hold all that is greatest and highest in them, *out of reach*. Such a traveller is like a passing marauder who can just reach to snatch a dusty apple hanging from a low branch over the road, but can never taste the fruit of the topmost boughs.

And yet this very traveller coming from an experience like my own in China feels it a need and a duty to mark the limits of his investigations very sharply. Among all the errors that he is liable to, there is none easier to fall into than that of accusing the race he is studying, of faults common to all other races. His observation runs the risk every moment of bursting out of the plane that it is supposed to be confined to, and he may trip himself up in the absurdity of sitting in judgment on Chinese egoism without perceiving that he is simply dealing with the irrepressible egoism of human nature.

Travellers should be careful to remember that in a foreign country their curiosity is always keenly on the alert, while at home it is generally dormant, and that this difference alone may be enough to falsify the comparison that they constantly make between the two

countries, and which, latent or confessed, is the basis of everything they say. If you are to be able to say that you *know* the Chinese, it is not enough to have observed the existence of certain sentiments in their natures. The same people might give evidence of contradictory sentiments under other circumstances. There is indeed no end to the surprises packed away in human nature. But we may say that Occidentals tend to unity of character. For one thing they have to. It is socially demanded. There is hardly one of them who does not try to make his own being a representation of the national spirit, as in the case of a picture where the whole composition has a central dominating point.

The character of the Chinese rather resembles one of their own long paintings, where one part develops while another part is unrolling so that the eye can never take in the whole of it at once. One may describe the soul of a Chinaman as a procession. First comes their celebrated *Politeness*, with all its attendant precautions, cares and attentions, but following close on its heels comes voluntary *Exclusiveness*, with its following of supercilious scholars and jeering philosophers which this intensively cultivated nation has never ceased to admire and uphold. Here come rational *Scepticism* and blatant *Superstition*, almost arm in arm! Here is magisterial *Indifference* who would not turn his head to look at a miracle, followed by childish *Curiosity* who will pry into a foreigner's parcel in a shop! Here is *Compassion* who has taken all live creatures under her care and will protect the life of one ant, followed by studied *Cruelty* with instruments of refined torture. Here is proverbial *Honesty* escorted by a great company of noble-looking merchants, closely followed by all the tricks and frauds of which travellers have complained for centuries already.

Confronted by all these contradictory elements diffused through the race, and sometimes assembled within one being, I am exceedingly averse from winding up with generalisations: it will suffice me to think:

"Though nothing seems clear and if I am not to be allowed to find the solution of the problem, at least I will retain the contradictory aspects of the case in my own mind."

During my sojourn in China I had a gong in my possession for time, with a very deep, beautiful note. I took to using it as an instrument of evocation, and to thinking of it really as a magic thing. Did I even brush against its sensitive silence, it answered me with a long, frail note, which I respected even to its ultimate whisper of reverberation. Then could I perceive, and understand, so I thought, in their very essence, the Hermits of the Mountains with their faces turned towards Nature and their lives consecrated to principle.

Then, gong-stick in hand, I would strike out the music of the bronze. And the majesty of Empire would appear to me. The swarming people of China came and went before my imagination like the shuttles of a weaver. Very much labour was performed, and even the flight of the birds in the heavens was regulated.

Impatient for new dramas, I struck again with redoubled strength! Then, I beheld the Courts of ageing Empresses maddened with ambition, conspiracies, explosions of rage and atrocious crimes. Astonished at being able to draw such contradictory visions and clamours from one source, again I heard the bronze cry out, shriek, burst into a confusion of appeals under my blows; then came women fleeing through palaces, soldiers bursting into golden halls whose haughty splendour was brought to terrible completion with the purple of Imperial blood. Then I would allow the bronze to quiver back to silence again. Once more the renowned order of China ruled over the Empire, and armies kept guard over conquered lands.

Then I saw the Emperor with his best-loved woman, in a pavilion on the banks of a lake. It was evening. Their only companion was a great poet, their friend, who had just been improvising a few strophes of the almost

incredibly subtle and exquisite homage which he rendered to the notorious Favourite. When he sang the verses the Emperor had accompanied him on his flute of jade. Now, they had all fallen silent, and the Woman smiled. And, just as the spirit of all the mirror-like waters beside them seemed gathered into the lotus flower's cup, so was all the bliss of this priceless moment treasured within her smile.

And yet, when the traveller, sailing away among Southern palm groves lets his memories drift back to China, he becomes conscious that China is the land of prose. How certain he feels of its intensely prosaic quality! Not that it is entirely lacking in a curious, rare, biting poetry of its own. But that poetry springs less from generous abundance of feeling than from the careful composition of emotions and the exquisite conventions with which they are managed in China. The soul of China does not overflow. Even the art of the greatest periods (of which modern China has little understanding) is to be defined by its resistance to outside influences quite as well as by its acquiescence in them.

The art of India makes for diffusion over the world, the art of China is changeless and motionless ; it is fixed, and without desire of expansion. It is not the richness of its elements which attracts us towards the soul of China, it is rather the formula by which those elements are combined, and it is the secrecy not the mystery of China which may become an obsession with us. From earliest days we discover a material foundation to the soul of China. A poem of the Fourth Century B.C. describes in detail, with incredible complacency, all the varied refinements of an Oriental's sensual life, and as the description of these joys is accompanied by a vivid representation of the horrors of a nightmare, the whole thing would be unique, and without analogy, if it did not recall certain Etruscan paintings.

Taoism, which no doubt originated in India, makes its first claim as the religion of the annihilation of self, but it was soon converted into the art of avoiding death, and at the very moment when the Adept is freed from the yoke of passions, Chinese common sense makes him value his long duration through many existences, as an adequate exchange. It is all in keeping with the soul of ancient China that the seat of intelligence was held to be the stomach, and that the funeral stelæ did not make the slightest allusion to a life beyond the tomb. And even when he practises various cults, the family is always the Chinaman's chief deity. They are certainly the most earthy of all peoples. No other race is so firmly rooted into the soil, nor given with so much beatitude to physical pleasures. No other race has made longevity the official end of all desires for good. Everything in China conspires to impose an obsession for material felicity upon man. Wherever you look, you see characters which evoke it, Genii who bestow it ; the swooping flight of bats lavish auguries of it and everything, from the furnishings of the temples to the fans and the jewels, from the imperial robes to the bowl from which the beggar eats his rice, is a repetition of the obese symbol of satisfaction, in its imposing plenitude.

It has often been noticed that the Chinese apply themselves with intense absorption to the surface of reality. But the more strength of application they spend on detail, the less they seem to have for embracing the whole of anything. One would say that just as tiny things slip through our fingers because of their lack of size, so the great things of existence escape them because they are too vast for them to hold.

Travelling along the rivers and roads you get an impression that the landscape is neither observed nor realised by Chinese wayfarers. It simply exceeds the power of their attention, and they can only realise the universe

by reproducing it in miniature in their restricted gardens. The immensity of Time, like that of Space, appears to be beyond their power of realisation, and even in the case of cultivated men, it seems that Time for them stretches out uncharted, and undivided, beyond the landmarks of a few years.

Nothing is more remarkable than the industry with which boatmen and field labourers mend their tools and instruments. But this ingenuity is cancelled out by an extraordinary lack of care and foresight. Their daily reparations have no value but as expedient. They hide from the attacks of the unexpected behind this little rampart. They will stop up a breach, but they never make a *sortie*. Their minds and wills are never masters of circumstances. It is true that the sciences have been practised in China. But besides the fact that we have to find out where they got the principles from, and clear up the mystery of their origin, it is above all necessary to judge whether the Chinese have attained to that methodical habit of mind by which alone the domains of knowledge may be commanded.

The young Chinamen who go in for the same studies to-day, often give evidence of remarkable facility according to the evidence of their foreign professors. But they are apt to think that they have grasped the whole problem as soon as it is stated in general terms to them, and should it be re-stated with a modification of some of the details, they find it hard to recognise that they are dealing with a slightly different aspect of a permanent case.

The average Chinaman even when fairly well educated, hardly considers the sciences otherwise than as a collection of formulæ and recipes. When some foreign engineers were assembled a little while ago in Pekin, the Government drew up a list of questions and sent it to them, in which they considered that they had included all possible problems in the construction and maintenance of a railway. The Chinese Government flattered itself that it had thus constituted a sort of book of magic which would enable

them to guard against any eventuality and (thanks to the naïve answers of the foreigners they consulted) to dispense with the foreigners themselves.

This absorption in detail is to be found in every department of life. Nothing could be more tortuous or complicated than Chinese political methods, when very often they only need to take a comprehensive general view of the matter in hand to find their way out of the labyrinth in a few paces. And yet in any estimation of their characters it is not enough to dwell on this tendency ; for in their case it has to be associated with a contrary disposition which is no less pronounced in them ; the pleasure of speculating and making decisions in the abstract. Formerly, in the periods when order prevailed in the Empire, allusion was constantly made to the power of Heaven and to high principles.

But these references to an ancient discipline which is declining, have now been ousted by individual indulgence in frenzies. One would say that the Chinese were compensating themselves for all those centuries of bondage to a State religion, and their escape from it partakes of the nature of delirium. There is no longer any controlling principle left to them in the general abandonment of restraint, but their idea of their own glory as a nation.

Quite recently a high Chinese authority at Tchong-King communicated some schemes he had in mind to a European acquaintance of his. It had been brought to his notice that the inhabitants of the two towns of which Tchong-King is made up, were very much cramped, and in order to give them more space he had decided to alter the course of the tributary which flows between them. It was at once represented to him that to correct the course of such a river was no light task, and that even if it could be accomplished, the cost would be stupendous. He immediately gave up this idea and turned to another. He wanted to raise a monument to the dead of the province. To whom in particular among the dead ? He did not know. That point he had not considered. He wanted

to build a showy monument, such as we see in Europe, and he may have been influenced by the idea that the construction of it would give employment, and bring business to the city. However, a few days later the author of these grand schemes was obliged to flee from the town to save his life.

In another province some young men desirous of having a hand in the government, and full of excellent intentions, also applied for advice from a foreign friend. It seemed that they wanted to exploit the latent wealth of the country and to interest foreigners in their enterprise. Everything was to be done on the grand scale. They made a special point of that. But when the European adviser came to examine into their schemes, they turned out to be mostly moonshine, and the only concrete possibility which emerged from them was the construction of one of those soda factories already common in China.

If you want to see the joy of the Chinese in turning from the ordinary affairs of life to plunge suddenly into a whirlpool of ideas, watch the crowd round an orator in the street. The orator himself is stiff with pride and joy, his nerves all on the stretch and his eyes brilliant. He speaks in a voice which has absolutely no charm, a voice which attacks harshly, and easily cracks and becomes shrill. And what is he saying to his listeners ? He does not lavish the images of flowery rhetoric upon them. Relying on the authority which their attention gives him, he is decisive and trenchant ! He lays a few dominating principles before them. The audience, apparently is spell-bound !

Watching them, one cannot fail to remember that China, like Greece, has had her sophists, who were able to make words the measure of the universe, and whose mouths " were full of mirages of the seashore," as the ancient text magnificently puts it.

In witnessing this sort of fever into which the Chinese are thrown by eloquence, one is inclined to think that they are of all nations the most fitted to practise that

cult of words which is one of modernity's many crazes. They abandon themselves to it all the more unreservedly because they have not the weight of a rich experience to hold them back. Chinese students boast of their love of justice and exactitude, and the sentiment does them credit. But it must be admitted that a certain precisely-outlined conception of what one considers just, imposes itself with all the more rigour, if the mind on which it is imposed contains a poor and faint conception of reality.

A zone of emptiness stretches between this restricted practical sense and this aptitude for uncontrolled speculations. This is the zone where speculation shares the honours equally with experience and with us it becomes the sphere of action. Everything in the West excites us to action. In China everything discourages action, frowns on it. Hercules, with his multitudinous exploits, is one of the first models whom we hold up to our schoolboys. Faust dies in his old age, just organising the draining of a marsh after having exhausted all the torments and all the joys of intellectual achievement. Idleness in our eyes is almost a crime. In China, it has the blessing of the greatest among the Sages.

If we find that men in authority are unwilling to assume the burden of action, it is no doubt in the first place due to care for their own interests, and it is enough to recall how entirely certain officials of our own, will efface themselves, from sheer fear of having to bear the responsibility of an unauthorised act, in order to conceive how this feeling may be extended in a country where the fear of responsibility is even more inveterate. Moreover, all their fundamental ideas support this feeling in counselling the Chinese to abstain from action. You may consider that you are only dealing with the timidity of some old governor who is afraid of compromising himself, but if we bring steady observation to bear on his apathy, we might find ourselves gazing into the dizzy depths of

the ideas of Lao-Tzen on the uselessness of all action. Perhaps at the very moment that we are pressing him hard, the old man is enveloping us in a critical scorn which we do not even guess at, the disdain of this ancient civilisation for the importunate Barbarian who destroys balance and order wherever he finds them.

Chinese literature is lacking in great epic-dramas, the history of some great intervention, or the spectacle of an individual who is torn between conflicting duties with the decision resting in his own hands. And yet the Chinese have always enjoyed playing a part. They have never been loath to put themselves forward. But in this country where the past dominates the present, the most stirring actions would only be proud imitations, and the man who performed them would be filling the mould of some hero of ancient China. It might demand a great deal of courage, but no originality would be required. One hears that it was once the same in France, and that during the Revolution, for example, the heroes of Antiquity were taken as models to be copied blindly. But that was a period of abnormal nervous excitement surging up to high-water mark, and at such a time it is no use to look for a typical heroic action of the Occident.

In China the very type of heroism is found in absolute obedience to a duty at any cost. In the seventh century B.C. Tsoei-Tchou set assassins in ambush to slay the Marquis of Tsi, who had made love to his wife, and the first recorder of the district wrote a faithful report of Tsoei-Tchou's assassination of his over-lord. Tsoei-Tchou was angered by this, and assassinated the recorder. The second recorder wrote the same report and met with the same fate. The third having made the same report was allowed to live by Tsoei-Tchou, who was tired of the business. But duly warned, a stream of the Southern recorders came up, to step into the tracks of each colleague who fell in the performance of his duty, and they did not return until quite certain that their sacrifice to duty would not be required. It has some likeness to the spec-

tacle of a long procession of bees succeeding each other at a post where one after the other they succumb.

To act is to dare to be yourself. It is a manifestation of the right which the individual may arrogate to himself, of leaving his impress upon circumstances.

But in this ancient world of China which keeps itself to itself, and where the very storms of nature seem but translations of the excesses of man, it is a question of vital importance that no one should emerge singly and stand out from the immense monotonous levels of thought and behaviour which are so amazing to Occidentals, where, like a touch of enamel, on a panel, each man is but a speck, contributing his acquiescent share to the smooth perfection of the whole design.

This innate repugnance to action is to be observed in every department of life. One day, a missionary, expecting a class, laid a wooden bench across the opening of the door, so that it became an obstacle to his pupils' entrance. One after the other the children crept through the narrow opening that he had left available. At last one of them took upon himself the responsibility of moving the obstacle. The missionary smiled. Nothing makes the Chinese so uneasy as a smile. They feel that you have stolen their own subtle weapon to turn it against them. The pupils would not leave their master in peace until he told them why he had smiled. " I wanted to test you," he said. " Seventeen of you preferred to suffer inconvenience rather than to move the bench. In my country the first child who came in would have moved it ! "

At another time a European doctor was praising a Chinese assistant of his to me. I waited to hear what his drawbacks might be. " The only thing is," said the doctor, " that he is baffled by an emergency. He is quite disarmed by an unexpected difficulty." No doubt this deficiency may be partly explained by the lack of complete mastery of his subject which I have alluded to in regard of other Chinese students who consider themselves qualified ; but the principal reason is to be found in the

Chinaman's specific horror of shouldering responsibility in isolated action.

I had only to watch the motor drivers in Pekin to become aware of their love of parade was equal to their incapacity for action. As long as it was simply a question of getting through the crowd with a great blare of trumpet and hooter, they were in their element, but if any unexpected difficulty arose from which they could have extricated themselves by skill and prompitude, one would have said that the danger fascinated them ; they simply rushed upon the accident in order to get it over as quickly as possible !

It is almost always like that. If a Chinaman comes to grips with circumstances, far from answering the provocation by a bold appeal to his own forces, he loses his head, just as a soldier, who has to step out of the ranks at the officer's command, is covered with embarrassment, and does not know which way to look.

And yet changes are coming. There is no doubt of that. The students, at least, take every opportunity of going into action nowadays. But their stagy demonstrations preserve much that is typical of the soul of old China. They are not so much demonstrations as frenzies. You may see those young men tearing their own flesh so that they may sign their protestations in their blood. And yet, even while urging themselves into action, they reassure themselves by seeking safety in numbers, every individual finding security in the depths of his own group.

But they have no idea of the discipline by which a mass of units may act as one. Their spiritual temperature runs down very suddenly and then the crisis is past. But these movements are exceptionally interesting, for they are valuable as evidence of the nature of the Chinese temperament. It is the nervous temperament. There is no doubt of it. Doctors who have worked here all

support the impression received by passing travellers. One of the European doctors told me that if a Chinese crowd could be medically examined, three-quarters of the men would present symptoms of hysteria, while in France, this would only be the case with one-quarter of the same number examined.

This temperament may be partly explained by the fact that the race is worn threadbare by the duration of its existence, but it is partly due to another cause, which does not occur to one at once, and that is the mutilation of the women's feet. Thus maimed, they live all shut up together at home in an atmosphere of perpetual squabbling. The word for dispute in Chinese is simply the character which signifies woman, repeated twice! This sort of existence brings them to such a pitch of exasperation that not infrequently one of them tries to hang herself, or to poison herself by swallowing the potassium of the lye, destined for her wash-tub, and doctors are often called in on these occasions.

If we count that this fatal sacrifice to the charm of small feet dates from the tenth century, as it certainly does (according to some people it dates from the fourth) we can realise all the bad, nervous heredity which has been accumulating in all that length of time. However, the custom really is beginning to go out, and though the town-dwellers do present signs of unhealthy dispositions, it must not be forgotten that the peasants are still a stronghold of robust health in the nation.

However that may be, the nervous temperament of the Chinese is a sufficient explanation of the contradictions in their characters, it explains why they are sometimes so soft and at other times so flinty in their amazing insensibility, and it explains why they may become victims of one idea or doctrine, after apparently absorbing a great many with complete indifference, and why they can be victimised by an idea to such an extent that they will give their lives for it, and from sceptics suddenly turn into martyrs. They have a tendency to obsessions. I

have several times had the opportunity of observing a delegation which came to make some claim.

They began with pleasant looks and courteous smiles. But when they entered upon the subject in hand their eyes began to gleam and their voices sharpened to a desperate falsetto, and whatever the answers made to them, they responded every time with the same statement of their grievances, repeated with a sorry display of blindly raging obstinacy. When you consider the contrasts which the character of these people present in the crises when they lose their wonderful self-control, you cannot help remembering the writhing monsters on the walls and houses of Chinese streets looking down on the quiet domestic stream of a nation with which for the moment they seem to have no connection at all. But let something unexpected occur, nerves go to pieces, people lose their heads, and the dragon pounces upon the victims that he has been stalking all the time, while they went quietly about their business beneath him.

Chinese imperturbability which is far more fragile than used to be suspected, represents a heroic victory of education over nature.

Formerly, indeed until quite recently, their passions and sentiments seen through a glassy film of politeness, presented that appearance of limpid nullity which is our idea of the life of fish in aquariums. Now that the restraint imposed on them is weakening, their natures are coming into sight. And what we see is just what we might have expected from all former signs and portents.

In thinking of China, two symbols come instantly to mind ; the square and the circle. The square of all the great enclosures, of every dwelling-house, and of pieces of furniture ; the circle of the temple, of certain doors, of the augural character to be seen everywhere, and the circle of round Chinese faces themselves. Of these two symbols, the square signifies residence and establishment ; the circle adds an idea of repletion to the central immobility of the first symbol, though in a sense, that is

less material, and seems to manifest two types of plenitude at once, that of the body which is obesity, and that of the soul, which is pride. The pride of the Chinese is overweening. It is so strong and so sincere that they have been able to communicate it to the works of their hands, to those great vases, which set amidst the æsthetic confusion of most Occidental homes, astonish our eyes by their dominating importance.

To appreciate this feeling as it really exists, you must remember the idea of her own importance which China has held for thousands of years, the world position which she attributes to herself, and that name of the Central Empire which she has bestowed upon herself. It is true that the spell is broken to-day, it has lost the cold, finished perfection of spells from the lunar world. The ancient pride is no less for that, and the Chinese would scorn to find support for it in circumstances. The wretched plight of their country makes no difference to their pride in it.

We are doomed to disappointment if we rely on the wonders of modern discovery to force admiration from them. Besides the fact that in common with the whole of Asia they believe that material progress has no connection with real civilisation, their absence of imagination and their poor conception of the scope of science, all lead them to consider the latest scientific discoveries as so many happy artifices. And if they were really astonished, nothing would induce them to show it.

"What do you think of that?" said a naïve foreigner, pointing out an aeroplane to a Chinaman in Pekin. The Chinaman emitted a contemptuous ejaculation, and added, as if he had immediately combined the characters which would signify aeroplane in Chinese, "*A kite, with a man in it!*"

It was this disdain which filled the frozen heart of old Li Hung Chang when in the course of his travels he took pleasure in allowing foreigners to perceive that he did not think much of their customs. In the same way,

those Chinamen who condescend to study our doctrines, maintain that they find all their fundamental principles in the doctrines of their own ancient Sages, allowing to us only the secondary merit of having developed them.

But this pride from being placid, has become irritable. Though the gulf is wide and deep between students and soldiers they will join forces in displaying the same aversion to foreigners. Politicians who have neither the knowledge nor the qualities for governing their country, consider themselves well fitted for it nevertheless, and the example of Japan confirms them in the idea. The privileges, the services, even the presence of foreigners are borne with extreme impatience, and we *must* face the fact that conditions of their residence there will become less and less favourable. The whole of China is upside down, and there is a prospect of long years of anarchy.

It is not only that all material organisation is deranged, but the very principles on which it rested have been attacked. Yet, the Chinese themselves are not much disturbed by the menace, for they know their own history. It has happened so often before. They are not troubled with the fears of a European for the safety of his own country's precious fragility. The Chinese are calm in the reflection that after a certain time that which was united separates, and that which has been separated will unite, and these vicissitudes appear quite as natural to them as the alternations of love and hate appeared to old Empedocles, which according to him are the alternations which rule the world.

One may hope that these agitations will serve to bind together the best elements of the Chinese people. Let us hope that the strong common sense of the commercial men will blend with the passion of the students for ideas. One may also reasonably suppose that in proportion as the Chinese mind becomes accustomed to the doctrines of foreigners they will not find it so difficult to take advantage of them.

The Chinese still preserve their domestic virtues, the

laws which govern the family, and though the time has arrived when the individual is obliged to free himself from them in some measure in order to enjoy some independence, it is no less certain that this reverence for family life constitutes a treasure in the national morality, which must be counted a grace in the people which possesses it.

The more evident it becomes that China lacks the strong individuals who are necessary for her redemption, the more probable it seems that she does possess the scattered elements required for the formation of their characters, though this could not be accomplished without many agitations and many ordeals. Perhaps in this way the new China will some day come to birth.

CHAPTER III

But the future is not all perspective, and it goes without saying that the fate of China depends a great deal on events all over the world. The whole of Asia is profoundly changed. Foreigners who have lived for many years in the Far East are astonished at the change in the attitude of their subordinates. The old servile respect is gone. It has been replaced by insubordination, either latent or openly avowed. The imposing façades built up by Occidentals have been ruined and are tottering. Should a great revolt break out in India, we should be sure to see corresponding troubles in China, just as it happened at the time of the mutiny of the Sepoys.

The idea of United Asia which has had sedulous propaganda from Okakura Kakuzo might then take shape as a terrific menace to the world. The Bolshevists are working day and night for this union of Asia against the white man. But the European nations have themselves prepared the way and the young Asiatics who have gone to be educated in Europe and America are the leaven of revolt when they return. Things have reached this point by fatality.

While exercising political domination in Asia, the white man has always preached equality ; it was inevitable that one day his actions would clash with his pronouncements. There is no doubt that theories and new principles remain powerless, and as if suspended in mid-air for a long time after their evolution, and it was really irresistible at some epoch in history for those in power to take all the prestige attached to the most liberal opinions, whilst reaping the solid advantages of a solid world, which was never made by liberalism.

But those days are past and gone, and we have got to realise it. We live in an epoch of penalties and consequences in one of those dramatic periods at which words become incarnate, and demand verification in the concrete. It is a time when we must all live dangerously, but life is very instructive to us all at present, never more so. The War only accelerated the pace of evolution ; and it shook the power of the white races profoundly, by displaying them in desperate straits and confusion, and in a condition of loose morality ; and it sent many slogans across the world which could not be expected to leave the nations outside the actual struggle unroused. These war-cries have lost all power in our war-sickened nations, but they recover their full effect when it is exercised upon multitudes who are hearing them for the first time, like those European medicaments to which Chinese patients react so rapidly and successfully that European doctors are always astonished by it.

All nations have been called to the banner of equality. The question comes uppermost everywhere, and is of such paramount importance that the ordinary trend of politics all over the world has been influenced by it. Not Asia alone is involved, but Africa is stirring, and is rousing the negro population of America.

Now, by a conjunction which makes the drama all the more thrilling, this comes to pass at a moment when the white man was on the point of submitting his ideas on equality to a very severe re-examination and re-casting, if not, of recanting his faith in them. It is at this point that he sees his ideas snatched out of his power and turned to account by other races. Just when he perceives with fatal clarity that it is not so easy as he dreamed to educate the masses of humanity, these multitudes have risen up and make insistent demands for water from the magic fountain of knowledge.

Just when he begins to have genuine doubts whether the equality between individuals does, can, or ever will raise the status of humanity, all the races of the earth have

begun to clamour for that very equality. Thus our own age is becoming an amplified repetition on the grand scale, of the age which preceded it. The same piece is going to be played over again, but the players who come on to the mighty stage are giants this time. Just as the principles of modernity were being sent up for examination for the first time, another and yet vaster world-experience took the stage, really terrifying this time by the universality of its character.

Staggered with surprise, what will the white man do ? Losing faith in his own slogans will he uphold them now that they are invoked against him ? Will he dare to pronounce new principles by which he can reaffirm his right, or his claim, to the dominating position ? When world-order is re-established the spirit of material common sense will no longer suffice. Indecisive action must fall back on judgment.

Some people imagine that the danger can be fended off by expedients which serve as temporary delay. Others fall desperately back upon a Force, which no longer exists. Others accustomed by political experience to think loosely and without precision, take refuge in the usual rhetoric, but in so doing, they accomplish nothing but the swelling of the tide of words which have already done so much harm and can never be recaptured. Words cannot rob circumstances of their tragic grandeur at this stage of man's existence. The white man's only adequate answer is another flash of self-revelation, in the exaltation of his own intrinsic worth, of his own audacity.

The plight that he now finds himself in is by no means only dependent on the circumstances which are pressing him hard. The causes of his malady are more deeply-seated. The essential weakness is in his own soul. There is no source of strength within him, to feed him for action. He will never be strong and noble again until he has found a faith. He must have a doctrine. Whether he continues to assume the responsibility of guiding the course of history, or whether he consents to become confounded

into the medley of mixed humanity that we are threatened with, he will have to declare himself, to *define* his new position in the world. And that is the drama of the Twentieth Century.

Let us continue our bird's-eye observation of an age that is coming to an end. A uniform of drab is spreading all over the earth, a uniform of ugliness. The long, glorious fête of life's joy and beauty is drawing to a close, and that with a rapidity which cannot but strike us. I remember when I was a child in the country watching with absolute consternation while a kitchenmaid was plucking a pheasant. Snatching up the glorious bird with vulgar unconcern, though to me it was an epitome of all the dazzling colours of autumn, she began to tear out the marvellous feathers by the handful, and the bare skin which appeared in their place had a wretched, chilly, almost obscene look, which caused me acute and shivering distaste. And that is how the beauty of the world is vanishing to-day.

The colour of a shirt or a sash, the sparkle of a jewel, everything which was once a bit of gallant self-expression for a race, a tribe, or a man, is passing away and will soon have disappeared altogether. Once upon a time the commonest utensil was a work of art, all over Asia. In China or Japan the petals of the peony, or butterfly wings adorned the crockery of the humblest peasant. The dreary, stupid products of factories have suppressed them all. Industry's dead objects have replaced the living breathing works of Art.

Industry changes the conditions of life wherever it is established; it has created conditions in Japan which have never been dreamt of there, which have profoundly disturbed the strong and delicate virtues of the Japanese soul. Eyes which knew ecstasy in the fabulous whiteness of new-fallen snow are now blinded with dark factory smoke. Just as art is being driven out, so Nature is

retreating from the vicinity of man. The cherry-trees and plum-trees which used to thrust their blossoming branches into the very cottage doors have disappeared from the squalid suburbs.

The noble ceremonies which used to guard the soul of the nation with splendour and pomp, are fading away and dying out for want of the spirit which supported them. Behind the people themselves the golden perspective of their legends and beliefs is being blotted out, those long, golden perspectives, which for each one of them afforded his own road to the Infinite.

Both the home and the countryside are losing the gods, their divine occupants, some of whom were compassionate and others terror-striking; and yet the latter seemed tamed by their long companionship with their devotees, and an expression of frolicsome comradeship was not lacking from some aspects of their awe-inspiring faces.

In a disinherited world where man no longer bestows attention on anything but his immediate needs, there are no more dreams. This immense widespread discoloration is a sign of the end of an epoch. That which we are losing is all that man had acquired, conquered by dint of self-dominion, hierarchy, discipline, morals, and the only thing that is left to us is the monotony of appetites.

In one aspect of the truth, it is true that certain distinctive characteristics are not being effaced, nature has imprinted them too deeply upon their races. Contrasts are not diappearing, but variety; that is to say, the pacific, happy æsthetic expression of differences has disappeared. Contrasts now only exist in the untutored and disagreeable elements of life.

Once upon a time the world was a great deal more spacious than it is now. There was elbow room for various civilisations. Louis XIV on his throne was not in the way of Kang-Hi on his. Empires had a fellow-feeling for each other, and each one was bounded by courtesy. The more rapid communications of modernity have abridged distances, but it has never been so plainly

evident before that certain factors, whatever their power of destruction, are incapable of creating the order which is beyond their scope altogether. This linking-up of interests from which so much was idly expected for the improvement of manners and morals has only succeeded in bringing enemies closer together, and in placing them in a better position for attacking one another.

The world is being unified, not united. Though now they are all equally ugly with modernity, the nations are more defiant and more jealous of each other than ever before, and that in spite of the fact that the casket which each one is defending has lost its treasure. In the face of all these ravages, one's despairing heart turns with avidity to the last remnants of all that is passing away. One would like to snatch and hold fast all the magic that is yet living in the marvellous continent of Asia, the magic of its antiquity when conquering heroes would order verses to be spoken to them, and princes fell in love with gardens, and when, like the bubbling jet of a crystal fountain, the marvellous tale-telling of Persia, spouted from an inexhaustible source.

The great spell of Asia consists in the fact that no Asiatic pursues a small empty existence of his own entirely cut off from the Infinite. Something of the highest speculations of the Sages is included in the stupor of any nameless dreamer crouching under the blazing canopy of that blue sky. And, as when some topmost branch in a forest, moves sighing in the rhythm of a straying breath, it seems as if the gesture was made for all the other trees of the forest, so in the East, one act involves the whole race.

With us, on the contrary, the mediocre individual is arrogantly himself, and nothing else of any kind. If he goes out to the East his inferiority becomes glaringly apparent. He is probably all the more truculent to the natives because he rages about the necessity for equality when there is any question of setting superiors above himself ; he is loud, gross and unaccommodating in a world

of exquisite reserve, deft allusion, and subtlety. In the domain of government he is obviously a *parvenu*.

But the great contrasts of East and West would not be adequately stated in these terms only. To represent them properly we must grant his full mental and spiritual stature to some Occidental man of genius. Asia, from her highest to her lowest level, is woven all in one piece. But the Europe of to-day has a double texture, that is to say, her common herds ignore and disown the high intelligences among them. These latter are lonely soveriegns who have no subjects. And yet to know Europe in any real sense you must know what these men are.

Asia fascinates us by her power of absorbing all things without definition of anything, by the close connection of thought with dream. Wisdom is hers. Method she willingly leaves to us. But it is only in the West that man has been brave enough to make the inventory of his spiritual riches which must leave him poorer; and this ardent desire for knowledge accompanied by a rigorous spirit of criticism, is really a sort of intellectual heroism which makes the warrior's naïve gallantry seem a lesser thing.

No doubt it is impossible not to feel ashamed of the ravages which inferior European minds have made in the East, but we must remember at the same time, that Europe is constantly rousing those of her sons who can make her Eastern rival more comprehensible to her, either by their research or their love, so that at the very moment the traveller believes that he has lost sight of her, she is recomposed in his own being, she, this Asia, where the widowed capitals draw down the veils of the deserts over their faces, where not only the rivers but the thoughts of man flow on a vaster and freer tide than elsewhere in the world; where cruelty has been carried to lengths undreamed-of, where compassion, less straitened than with us, is extended to all living creatures, and is even extended to the frozen existence of stones, where Oriental art, though far more voluptuous than ours, can bear the soul to heights beyond the reach of our art,

even to the retreats of infinite disdain, and even to the peaks of renunciation.

Asia is ancient—but a child. She is more credulous than we are because she is fascinated by legends, and yet far less credulous because one glance of her eyes pierces the gross illusions which we fall victims to. She teaches us that we must not be the dupes of these things, and not even the dupes of ourselves. There is no mind so high in Europe that she cannot reach it and pass beyond. At the very moment when we lay siege to her base, she is conquering our summits. At the very moment when modern materialism is invading her domain, she has taken possession of every element in Europe which is disgusted by that materialism.

Everything at the bases of our systems is in opposition to her, and everything at the summits, is of a like mind with her. Perhaps this revenge of hers is both melancholy and vain. It is none the less necessary to pass all these exchanges in review and to possess a definite idea of these various movements in opposition to one another, if we wish to have a truly balanced notion of our own age.

On the lower planes, for the majority of men the poetry of life is fading away, at the summits of life it is becoming more essentially intense. Long ago, in the old days in China, the Taoists would suspend mirrors of bronze on the branches of trees when evening fell to condense on them the pure water of the nocturnal dew. Thus at the present time, all the world over, a few worshipping souls collect the scattered manifestations of sublimity which are vouchsafed to them.

CHAPTER IV

THERE was a source of never-failing interest to me on the Messagerie mail boat which bore me back to France. It was the sight of the young Chinamen who were going over to complete their studies in France. They nearly all travelled second or third class, which are cheaper of course, but you would have said there was some magnetic attraction to them in the bows which assembled them at the extreme forward point of the ship, as if they were looking already for the first sight of the land they had come so far to see. There they stayed, crowded together, reading, talking and eating. Linen which they had washed themselves fluttered on a line above their heads, hitting them on the forehead sometimes as it gambolled in the wind.

And there are always other young Chinamen travelling to Japan and America. England herself has not scorned to make herself attractive to them ; they are to be found on every line of shipping in the world.

One cannot withhold admiration from the ironical work of fatality which gives the Occident a hand in forming the very characters which are to turn Occidentals out of the East. The nations of the West hope to increase their influence by the effect of their teaching ; that is enough for them, and they are unable to see further into the matter.

A Frenchman well versed in the Chinese character was once praising some Chinese pupils who had been under him for some time. I asked him where he found the point of difference between the Chinese and ourselves. " Not in the intelligence," he answered, " but rather,

in the will. If we did not go and shake them up sometimes, they would never stir!" How often since then, that artless remark has returned to my mind!

They *have* been shaken up now, and the multitudes are unmistakably roused. Those vast reservations of reposefulness which once existed for humantiy have been done away with. The most undeniable effect of modern ideas has been to put the whole population of the globe into a state of nervous unrest.

Yet this thirst for learning has its touching aspect, it has always been a keen thirst in China. As I watch the young Chinamen on board my boat, I am reminded of the pattern students of China; Koang-Heng who made a hole in the wall in order to steal a little light from his neighbour's lamp; and Kiang-mi who contented himself with the light of the moon for his studies, and Tchee-yinn who read in the summer evenings by the light of glow-worms shut up in a lantern and greatest hero of all, Sounn-Kang who read in winter by no better light than the white glare which is cast up by the snow on the ground. Then my thoughts travelled further and higher to the exploits of those noble Buddhist pilgrims who, from the fifth to the seventh centuries, made pilgrimages into India in search of relics and sacred books. What are the perils which they did not brave in that cause! By land there were brigands, fierce tribes, and the demoniac spirits which infest the desert; and huge mountain ranges covered with snow to be crossed. On the sea there were tornadoes, pirates and the enormous, sinister waves caused by the movements of sea monsters who almost turned the waters upside down.

It is only by our tame acceptance of appearances that we are able to consider this voyage of the present day less dangerous to the young Chinese pilgrims. Just let us realise what it must be like to spring from one world to another, where practically no one understands our language and where all the circumstances of life are so changed as to be almost out of our powers of conception, even down

to the very food that we must put into our mouths. No doubt their lack of imagination prevents them from realising what a fantastic adventure they are bound upon. We must realise it for them.

Rooted out of their own soil, what will become of them ? The wealthy ones will give themselves a good time. The most industrious will put all their energy into winning some diploma, and this salutory absorption will save them from many mistakes. But there are others with wider ambitions and more flexible ideas, and it is for them that the danger is really great. When the control of the impersonal wisdom of China is withdrawn from these characters, their state of bewilderment is quite indescribable, nothing but the boundless indetermination of Asia remains in them.

Even the best intellects of Young China, who, like M. Liang Ki, display the most touching curiosity about our doctrines, cannot help allowing us to perceive the state of uncertainty which they have been thrown into by our ideas sometimes. But only Sages will ever admit that they are hesitating. Young people in like case, insist upon defining their positions by affirmations which are as trenchant as they are fortuitous. As young Chinamen make a great point of following the fashions, and as they still believe that the most modern opinions are necessarily the most violent, they always profess the most violent opinions, being drawn to them as much by vanity as by feebleness of judgment.

Thus, torn up by the roots from one world and not really planted in another, only too many of them go to swell the semi-intellectual mob of rebels which is a constant menace to civilisation. With their heads stuffed with heterogeneous knowledge which swells their vanity without making them good for anything definite, they experience that black disgust with existence, that mortal anguish which dog the excesses of mind and spirit even more assiduously than those of the flesh. To get away from the dread terrors of impotence, they are reduced to

revenging themselves either upon others or as a last resort upon themselves.

As with the majority of Russian students they are faced with the choice of indefinite waiting or of suicide. In Japan, after the year 1900, an absolute epidemic of suicide broke out. A boy of eighteen called Fujimura Misao threw himself into the cascades of Kegon near Nikko, leaving the following declaration behind him :

" Alas ! The vastness of the Universe has overwhelmed me !
Alas ! How illimitable is Time !
Dwarf that I am, five feet of manhood only I would embrace all this immensity.
What value or authority has the philosophy of Horace when finally summed up ?
The real nature of the Universe can only be expressed in the word : incomprehensible !
Pierced by this thought as if by a sword of anguish I have at last resolved to die, and already as I stand high on the rocks ready to take the plunge, my heart knows peace for the first time. For the first time I understand that the extreme limit of despair coincides with the extreme limit of felicity." [1]

The poor boy's example was followed by many others. And others again in their confusion of mind and spirit flung themselves upon Christianity, Buddhism and the philosophy of Spinoza. Darwin and Spencer were deserted for Nietzche and Gorki. Then followed a craze for Schopenhauer. This is a spectacle which inspires only pity and disgust. The saturnalia of the mind is the saddest of all.

It is difficult to determine which are the least justified among the prevalent ideas of any one epoch. They are perhaps those which appear to be the most natural. It cannot be denied, however, that among those which are received to-day there is none which is less representative of reality than the idea that knowledge is overflowing

[1] Taken from the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 1903, vol. III., page 537.

at a public fountain, where every wayfarer can quench his thirst. Education does not *offer* its treasures. They have to be struggled for.

Nothing is more serious than the effort to acquire knowledge. But if, for every one of ourselves it is an ordeal which will find out every weak joint in our armour, what must it be for young men placed in conditions which are utterly strange to them. It is when we realise their plight in this way that we cannot help wishing that they might be chosen, for their suitability for foreign travel, and helped and guided when they arrive in Europe.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, the different civilisations of the world should only communicate through the medium of the elite of each nation. Far from demanding that the young Chinamen shall sever all connection with their own race, they ought to be encouraged to refer back in all things to their source.

Many of those who go abroad for education only develop an acid and jealous disposition towards the nation they are visiting in proportion as they lose their feeling for their own country. One would like to see this state of affairs reversed, so that in preserving their loyalty to their own nation we could create loyalty in them to ours. Only ill-furnished minds make a passion of uniformity. In the present state of the affairs of the world there is no nobler end to be adopted than that of preserving the different separate spirits of the world in their integrity.

CHAPTER V

Worn out by the uselessness of human effort, how gladly the mind turns to the spectacle of the Universe for refreshment. I find my relaxation in just sitting gazing at the sea. The Indian Ocean is blue with the marvellous transparent blue of a sapphire, which wells up from the depths to the surface, unlike the Mediterranean, which presents a hard, blue surface to the eye, which seems to have no relation to the watery abyss beneath it. The soul is deliciously lulled to sleep by this liquid heaven.

Every now and then, flying fish come flicking their way along the surface of the waves, and there is always an element of surprise in the sight of that little wing, which cannot be parted from the water.

On fine days the flying fish are innumerable and as the ship glides peacefully forward, they start up in myriads from either side of her course, just as grasshoppers spring away from the trampling feet of a pedestrian striding across grass. The luminous monotony of the successive hours at sea is only broken by the drama of the sunsets. This evening, when the sun dipped behind the sea line, the whole arch of space was gorgeously illuminated by its vast reflection, in diverse colours, which almost seemed to have waited until the great day-star had vanished, to declare his name and his might. One was reminded of the melancholy destiny of certain great men who are never heard of until after they are dead.

This is the hour when the traveller's mind, grown empty from the day's monotony, is filled with gorgeous pageantry. The effect of travel is two-fold. On the one hand it prompts us to observe the particular in the characters of different races, and on the other, it restores

to us the feeling of the universal. Wind, sky and sea, which are only names to other men, become divine personalities to the traveller.

The outlook of the stay-at-home is bounded by the barrier of personal care which shuts him into a narrow enclosure. The stars only really shine for the man who has left all that, to follow his bent. The stars are the shining fruits of a voyage. Venus was of marvellous size and splendour to-night. As if heavy with light, she subsided gradually towards the horizon where the moving waters held writhing reflections of her disdainful, golden beams. Now it is past midnight. And all the stars are above me, not as we see them through the thick, smudging atmosphere which hangs over towns, but purified from the effects of our dingy little lives, and plunged into the element of their own incalculable epochs.

Orion, having taken refuge at the Zenith, seems small and faint and far away. There is the Southern Cross at the declivity of the southern skies. Sirius stabs out dazzling darts of brilliancy. Canopus seems to be palpitating with some effort to discharge his rays through the fabulous distance which lies between him and us. As for the contemplator, lying with his head thrown back, his personality has vanished in the empty spaces of this majestic void. Everything in him that once was individual, petty, or human has been struck down and petrified by this hail-storm of dazzling worlds above him.

Sometimes, the better to purge myself of all connected thought, I call up some of the sea images which this voyage has left deep in my consciousness. I see again the infinite sadness and desolation of a sunset over the Atlantic. The swelling, tossing surface of the sea was grey-blue in colour, somewhere between steel-blue and inky-blue. The yellow sun was emerging from a long, black barrier of clouds which had soaked up all its rays, and was sliding swiftly downwards to the sea. But all over the sea surface the restless tossing waves lifted themselves, each a separate shape, towards the sinking

sun, as if insisting on their separate existence, in the rising and sinking of them all.

"Crown me!" was the prayer of each. "Give me existence!" And when these waves in supplication reached their height, all that they received from the sun was the momentary illumination of a coppery beam of light, which they lost as they sank, while already the light had passed to the crests of rising waves.

It was impossible to watch this sterile agitation of the waves without seeing them as the symbols of souls living out their destinies.

Another recollection remains with me from the last night before arriving at Japan, when the ship, having gone so far north as to get a sight of the Aleutian Islands, suddenly plunged down into an atmosphere of moist heat. It was a still, black night, quite starless, or rather it seemed as if all the stars had fallen into the water round the ship. The foam of her course was illumined with pale points of light, giving the effect of pearls lying in lace. The horizon had disappeared, and nothing was visible but these jewels of pearly light which gleamed and then disappeared into the surrounding darkness. The wake behind the ship was a milky way of phosphorescence. Ahead of us, the water melting into the shades of night, stained with specks of light reflected from the ship, seemed like a sheet of luminous rain behind her stern. I felt that the vessel was suspended in space bound on some sidereal voyage, and that I myself was a free spirit oblivious of all that had gone before, empty of all things as the dead, with a consciousness so void that I was surprised to feel that I still recognised my identity. It seemed to me that I was bound for *the* destination at last.

Then there is a vision of marvellous weather in the Indian Ocean, weather of so diaphanous and delicate and finished a quality that it wiped out all memory of less polished delights, just as the crystalline perfection of perfect verse wipes out the memory of the best con-

structed phrases of prose. The sea had become so ethereal that near the horizon it was impossible to distinguish it from the sky, and when the eye, travelling upwards, encountered a cloud, one took it at first for a ship having lost the perception of a dividing line between water and ether.

The immense peace and pale perfection of the day seemed like the expression of divine sleep. I was invaded by the enchanted astonishment that one would feel on entering a great palace where, instead of encountering guards and prohibitions, one found every door wide open, giving access to the supreme treasures of the house and the very sanctuary of the Queen. Not a vestige of a ripple disturbed the flat calm of the ocean, not a breath met the ship in her course, and in all that vast space, enclosed by the far distant horizons, the air was as little disturbed as the atmosphere of some inner chamber of a house. No dolphins appeared, as if they too respected the luminous calm stretches of the sea; and for my own part I felt bound to annihilate all active mental preoccupation from my being, to have as little conscious existence as possible in order to assert myself as little as possible while the hours of that ineffable day passed by. When evening came a few faint clouds floated across the sky, some were rose-coloured and some were yellow, and others were of a violet-grey, approaching wine-colour, while the shallow furrows now just perceptible in the oily calm of the sea were touched with shades of carnation, alternated with verbena. It was not the restrained calm of a lake, but a prodigious and unspeakable serenity in which I thought that I could perceive at last the dreaming smile of the Infinite.

But the ship had to go forward all day long, and we left that day in Paradise behind. Early next morning I thought for a little while that it would happen again. But of course it did not, and I soon perceived that we were in the work-a-day world again by a general coarsening and thickening of the beauty of the weather, by the dis-

tinct form of the rippling waves, and by the massive nature of the drifting clouds. Then as if they were escorts of activity and cheerfulness the dolphins began to reappear and a troop of them gambolled round the ship with such unrestrained delight and buoyancy that there was something at once childish and divine in their innocent jubilation.

While watching them it came into my mind that others like them, must have recognised the ship of Alexander, and have fêted it with the same frolics, in these very waters. When he sailed down the Indus, transporting his army in the fleet he had built from the timber on its banks, the Hero made all sail for the open sea until he had lost sight of land. Then at the centre of the vast circular horizon he sacrificed bullocks to Poseidon, poured libations to Dioscurus, to the Nereids and to Thetis, the mother of his ancestor Achilles, and then he flung the gold wine cup far into the green sea water.

That image intoxicates, and always has intoxicated, me. The golden phantom of that wine cup is always the symbol which proclaims the Occident to me when I am returning from the East. None other, among the world's great men has been able to preserve the legend of his beauty apart from the legend of his gigantic mental stature so well as Alexander. But what did that beauty consist in, if not in the refusal to lose his own mould ? Favourable to Asia for political reasons, and indulgent because of his natural magnanimity, Alexander never allowed her interference to compromise him. Formed on Aristotle, an enthusiast for Homer, in love with poetry, and a master of rhetoric, his pride, his just pride was always lined within by extreme and exacting self-criticism. Even in the act of receiving adoration you may hear him murmur these pregnant words : " Zeus is the Father of all men, but He only recognises the choicest, as His sons." Through all the clouds of incense which surround Alexander, he remains for all time the type of conscious superiority.

CHAPTER VI

The traveller going back to France from the Far East is like a bird which cannot regain its nest without running the gauntlet of sportsmen's guns. Every time the ship puts in he feels the shock of abrupt change from one world to another.

First India lets fly her arrow of beauty to transfix him, then Africa discharges her long, bare shaft. Going up the Red Sea he is confronted with scenes of serene desolation, with rose-red cliffs which appear to be painted on gauze and almost of the same texture and consistency as the air ; this landscape can only be described by the word incandescent, and is apt for crazing the mind with a mania for unity. At Port Said he touches the edge of that daïs of light which is Egypt. And then he comes back to the narrow little Mediterranean. Still stupefied with the calm of tropical seas the ship is suddenly seized and caught up by the dancing waves. Headlands jut out sharply, and everything seems to aspire towards definition.

Then the traveller begins to feel himself torn between two worlds. The world that he is leaving still clings to him by the power of its charm, its spells, its indefinite perspectives, its wisdom which co-exists with delirium ; and beyond its splendid gods, its feverish agitations and its terrors, the traveller remembers (as one who will never forget) that calm, calm smile which pronounces that all is vanity.

But with fanfares like trumpets the wind heralds the Occident, that region of the narrow and the precise, where man is always fatiguingly on his feet, and sets

up the marks of his frontiers on the banks of northern rivers, on mountain sides and on the threshold of deserts. Here the individual becomes the antagonist of destiny. Everything proclaims his vanity in action. But what is action worth if it does not proceed from mighty thoughts ?

Just now, having walked forward, I saw a wonderful spectacle. The sea was running high in cohorts of dark or dense blue waves towards the horizon, where no land was yet to be seen ; but high above the horizon line, like a fortress which betrays its existence by its battlements, the peaks of the Alps, jagged points like frozen flames, polished and crystalline, rose to meet the sublimity of the ether.

And yet at this moment of home-coming there are other peaks that I would see ; those of the supreme honours of my country, the sovereigns of art and thought.

I have already said it, but I repeat it. It is not the economic position which is confounding the human race to-day, it is the most complete crisis of feeling and idea that the world has ever known, the only crisis of the kind which has ever included the sum total of humanity.

The Occident sees its responsibility growing at the same rate as its influence, in this immense decomposition. The Occident is the world's forge for new ideas. In this Europe that we know now, dislocated by the war, in which the Germans are only manifest as the most formidable of our inferiors, in which England must lay down the weapon of her egoism, hitherto so successful, before the new, pressing problems of humanity, it is France who best preserves the tradition of really free thought, though perhaps only in scattered individuals.

Let the poets, scholars and philosophers and indeed all beings who move on a high plane of thought realise the burden of their responsibility to the human race as never before. The highest activities are now the most necessary, the most practical. Standing above the confusion of

conflicting interests and the treachery of rhetoric, the philosophers must become even more scrupulous in their researches, more watchful in gathering up every precious scrap which the ruin of ancient civilisations liberates and disperses. And if they wish to rescue the great spirit in humanity, and to inspire the future heroes of the world for action, they must dare to fly high in thought.

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